Chapter 1
Seni Silat Haqq Melayu: A Sufi Martial Art

The integral connection of religion or spirituality to Asian martial arts has long been known, as has the correlation of combative forms to the nobility. For example, in Japan the Samurai followed the code of *bushido*, a derivative of Buddhism and Shintoism, and in some styles of Chinese kung fu sets of movements are named "Buddha hands" and "yin yang seizing hands." Therefore it is not surprising that religion, mysticism, and magic are embodied in Malay martial arts (*silat*), or that *silat* was once considered to be the exclusive purview of the Malay aristocracy.[1] Along with noble and spiritual connections many Asian combative forms, including *silat*, are also linked to medicine, art, and calligraphy, but these links and their overall assemblage have rarely received attention in the Malaysianist anthropological literature.

"Martial art" is a modern term for Asian combative practices and the discourses arising from them spanning long centuries of transmission. Martial arts are a whole comprised of philosophy, religion, magic, medicine, and the combat skills needed to defend the self, family, community, religion, and state; as such they are microcosms of culture *par excellence*. By "martial art" I am referring to an ontological and an epistemological category; a martial art is composed from a series of parts (philosophy, religion, magic, medicine, and combat skills), conceived and configured into an analytical whole. Therefore martial arts may be understood as a complex "multiplicity" (Deleuze and Guattari 2002: 8).[2]

[1] Malaysian informants use the term *silat* to describe Malay martial arts. Following their use I employ *silat* as a noun, and *bersilat* as a verb meaning to "play" *silat. Bersilat* is abbreviated from "*bermain silat*," which literally means "to play *silat*." *Pesilat* refers to what Malays call the "*silat* player" or practitioner. There is a formidable arsenal of terms used to refer to martial arts in Southeast Asia, and many problems of definition, semantics and synonyms. In Malaysia, Malay martial arts are referred to as *seni silat* (the art of *silat*), *bersilat, ilmu silat*, (*silat* science/magic), and *seni-beladiri* (self defence). *Gayong* is another synonym for *silat* in Malaysia and Sumatra. There are many variations in Indonesia, but basically in Sumatra *silat* is called *silek*, and in Java *silat* is known as *pencak silat*. Chinese kung fu fused with *silat* is known as *kuntao*.

[2] Martial arts offer insights into discourses of power, body, self, identity (Zarrilli 1998), gender, sexuality, health, colonialism, nationalism (Alter 1992, 2000), history, culture (Sheppard 1972), emotions (Rashid 1990), and warrior cults (Elliot 1998). Ethnographic literature documenting the martial arts began to flower in the 1990s including, for example, Lowell Lewis (1992) on the

D.S. Farrer, *Shadows of the Prophet*, Muslims in Global Societies Series 2,
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9356-2_1, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2009

Literature regarding *silat* has steadily accumulated during the past three decades. General surveys of *silat* in Southeast Asia include Draeger's (1972) pioneering study of Indonesian combatives and weaponry, and Maryono's (2002) more recent overview which examines the transition of *silat* from mysticism to sport (*silat olahraga*). Technical manuals of Malay *silat* include Anuar (1992), Hamzah bin Ahmad (1967), Ku and Wong (1978), Orlando (1996), and Shamsuddin (2005). References to *silat* are to be found scattered across the literature of Southeast Asian theatre and dance, including de Zoete and Spies (1952: 252–257), Fernando-Amilbangsa (1983: 34), Mohd. Chouse Nasuruddin (1995), and Simatupang (n.d.). Other references are found in martial arts literature such as Chambers and Draeger (1978) and Maliszewski (1996). Cordes (1990), Mohd. Anis Md. Nor (1986), and Pauka (1998, 2002) address *randai silek*, the *silat* based theatre and dance form of the Minangkabau. De Grave (2001), Gartenberg (2000), Wiley (1993, 1994), and Wilson (1993, 2004) discuss *pencak silat* in Java with an emphasis on power, mysticism, rationalization, and the development of the modern Indonesian nation state.

Rashid (1990), Sheppard (1972, 1983), Tuan Ismail (1991), and Shamsuddin (2005) focus specifically upon *silat* in Peninsular Malaysia. Tuan Ismail (1991) produced an exceptional analysis of Malay *silat* (*silat Melayu*) from a social science perspective, which included dozens of technical photographs and discussion. Rashid (1990) proposed that *silat* acts as a psychological trigger of the emotions prior to violence. Steeped in Islamic mysticism, Malay *silat* coexists with animist cult-like practices (Rashid 1990: 92–93). Hence *silat* is addressed in books on Malay magic as a form of magical dance (Skeat [1900] 1984), as a type of war magic (Shaw 1976: 22–29), and as a form of shamanism (Werner 1986: 22–39). My account seeks to address and expand the discussion of *silat* as a form of shamanism, sorcery, magic, Sufism and alchemy.[3]

As microcosms of culture the martial arts are a good place to re-examine some of the thorny problems of anthropology. Africanist anthropology draws a distinction made famous by Evans-Pritchard [1937] 1977 in his study of the Azande: that the witch is innately a witch by virtue of a witch substance contained in the belly, whereas the sorcerer's knowledge and power are learned. Though seen as a cause for misfortune the powers of the witch are exercised outside of the knowledge of the witch who may not even be aware that he or she is a witch. The unconscious power of the witch to cause harm contrasts with that of the sorcerer whose malevolent power to injure and kill is exercised deliberately through magical ritual. In contrast to Africanist anthropology, Stephen (1987: 67, 73–75) notes that in Melanesia the shaman, the sorcerer, and the meditative mystic are part of the same complex of

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Brazilian martial art *capoeira*; Wiley's (1997) *Filipino Martial Culture*; and Zarrilli's (1998) work on *kalaripayattu*.

[3] I employ the term "alchemy" in the Jungian sense, not literally to transform lead into gold, but as a metaphor for the transformation of the self (Jung 1953).

practitioners—each is a master of souls—with the difference being that the shaman has simply been more accessible to anthropological enquiry than the sorcerer.

Developing from Stephen's work my thesis is that the analytical separation between the *bomoh* (indigenous Malay healer) and the *guru silat* (*silat* master) tends to be overblown: the *guru silat* are warriors and healers, artists and religious virtuosos, sorcerers and shamans.[4] Although, *guru silat* are here predominantly conceptualised as war magicians, they may also be addressed as warrior shamans (to emphasise the magic of healing) or warrior sorcerers (to emphasise the magic of killing). Therefore, without more of an understanding of Malay *silat* and of the practices of the *guru silat* the anthropology of Malay magic, shamanism and sorcery is imbalanced.

The problem of faulty conceptualizations rebounding through the literature partly arises due to the conceptual legacy bequeathed by the British colonial scholars. For example, Winstedt's [1925] (1993) book *The Malay Magician* bears the subtitle *Being Shaman, Saiva and Sufi*, but omits to discuss the *guru silat*. I attempt to redress the balance which has tipped so far in disfavour of the *guru silat*, and to restore them to their rightful position as the inheritors, producers, and keepers of the Malay inheritance (*warisan*), including knowledge relating to combat, healing, sorcery, magic and shamanic performance. To my knowledge this is the first ethnographic account to examine Malay *silat*.

Prologue

This account of the Malay martial art *silat* focuses upon a particular *silat* organization called Seni Silat Haqq Melayu. Pa' Ariffin, who is a follower and bodyguard (*hulubalang*) of the Malaysian Prince H.R.H Shaykh Raja Ashman, leads Seni Silat Haqq Melayu.[5] Raja Ashman is the son of the Sultan of Perak, and a foremost figure (*caliph*) of a transnational organization of Islamic mystics known as the Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufi Order (*tarekat*).[6] The Haqqani branch of the Naqshbandi Order—there are many branches, see Nicholson [1914] (1963), Trimingham (1971), and van Bruinessen (1992, 1998)—is headed by Shaykh Nazim, who is venerated as a living Saint, and regarded

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[4] Wilkinson is perceptive when he says that Islamic mysticism "when it takes the pantheistic form of self-identification with emanations from a divine principle" is the source of many performances such as the *dabus* (where "aspirants" stab themselves with *keris*) (Wilkinson 1906: 16).

[5] In the Malay language (*Bahasa Melayu*) *pak* abbreviates *pak cik* meaning "uncle," *mak* abbreviates *mak cik* (aunt), and these are used as an honorific prefix by *silat* elders, and connote a kind of fictive kinship. In Malaysia many *silat* masters may prefix their name with *cikgu* (teacher) rather than *guru silat*, although the terms can be used interchangeably. Many students simply refer to the teacher as "*Pak*" (said *Pa'* as the "k" is not aspirated in Malay). Javanese Malays may use the term *wak* (Uncle) or *embok* (Aunt) in much the same way (only here the "k" is aspirated). In Indonesia, *guru silat* may be called *ibu* (mother) or *pak* (father, from *bapak*) (Farrer 2006a: 29 n13). Pa' Ariffin uses the old style *Pa'* in writing his name and his overseas students run the words together calling him something like the incenderary liquid "paraffin." I have adopted this usage throughout.

[6] *Caliph* means deputy, ruler of the community of Islam.

Fig. 1.1 Janda Baik *zawiya* (Sufi lodge)

by his followers as the contemporary representative of God upon earth. Seni Silat Haqq Melayu claim to practise the original Malay *silat* (*silat Melayu*), which they bill as a Sufi martial art, and (formerly) a closely guarded secret of the Malay aristocracy.[7]

Except for occasional lengthy forays into Malaysia, Pa' Ariffin resides in the United Kingdom. In 1996, shortly after having attained a hard won black-sash in Southern Praying Mantis kung fu, I joined his cosmopolitan group for black-belt training, and I trained in London with them for the next two years. In December 1999 I was invited by email to a jungle camp in a village called Janda Baik in Pahang, Malaysia (Fig. 1.1).

Here the *guru silat* and many of his followers gathered together with two container loads of their possessions, and began to stockpile food as a precaution "in case anything should happen" (Pa' Ariffin).[8] They were waiting for Doomsday (*Qiamat*), which in a premonition foretold by Sheikh Nazim was said to coincide with advent of the New Millennium.

At the time I was reading *When Prophecy Fails*, and this curious ethnography of a millenarian cult in 1950s America prompted me to attempt a lone ethnography of

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[7] In Peninsular Malaysia the term *seni* (art) differentiates Malay *silat* from Indonesian *pencak silat*.

[8] Nielson (1998: n.p.) notes the same phenomenon in Lebanon where Naqshbandis gathered to wait out the New Millennium after stark predictions of the world's demise from the group's leader Shaykh Nazim.

Seni Silat Haqq Melayu; at first covertly, secretly making field notes while supposedly writing letters home, and later overtly, when I decided to seek the approval of the group (Festinger et al. 1964). The end of the world failed to occur, but towards the end of the Millennium several students converted to Islam, by surprise. For example, when Pa' Ariffin asked one student "are you ready?" he had expected something entirely different. This sounds bizarre, but he thought he was going to place his hands into a cauldron of boiling oil. The ordeal by boiling oil was a kind of reward the senior students had been promised for their hard work; a reward that was to follow a forty day period of prayers and training, but one that did not materialize for anyone at Janda Baik. Inexorably, most of the students ran out of money, time, and patience for the *guru silat*, and for each other, and after several heated arguments Seni Silat Haqq Melayu began to disintegrate. In this case cognitive dissonance did not bring the group closer together—instead, to coin a phrase from Pa' Ariffin, they became "fed up of being fed up" and scattered.[9]

Later, other camps were spoken of, this time more for *silat* than anything else, but none was immediately forthcoming. Finally, in 2001 the *guru silat* decided to put a few of his students through another forty day period of training in Malaysia, and I tagged along. This time, the training did culminate in an ordeal by boiling oil. The ordeal by boiling oil (*mandi minyak*) is an initiation rite of the Malaysian martial arts organization Silat Seni Gayong Malaysia, a martial art that shares certain fundamental affinities with Seni Silat Haqq Melayu.

Upon his return to London Pa' Ariffin began to concentrate his efforts upon introducing *silat gayong* to the U.K. The remaining students of Seni Silat Haqq Melayu expressed a strong dislike for their new uniforms, with their three-quarter length trousers and pointy hats (*tanjat*), and regarded the idea of shifting from Seni Silat Haqq Melayu to Silat Seni Gayong U.K. as an inverted metamorphosis, a "status degradation," where the polished style of the aristocrats was to be replaced by what they regarded as a crude peasant prototype.[10] Late in 2002 Pa' Ariffin brought a contingent of Silat Seni Gayong Malaysia students (*pesilat*) to the U.K., and using funds derived from a few of his diehard British students set up a theatre show in London called *Silat: Dance of the Warriors*. The show ran for one week and although it

[9] For a useful discussion of literature concerning cognitive dissonance see Luhrmann (1989: 268–273).

[10] Finkelstein (1996: 678) points out that: "Although he [Garfinkel] listed eight conditions required to achieve status degradation the notion hinges on the way in which 'moral indignation brings about the ritual destruction of the person being demeaned' (1956: 421) so that 'he must be defined as standing at a place "outside," he must be made strange' (op. cit.: 423)." Finkelstein uses this notion to explain the collapse of authority in the prison when a new governor refused to implement the Christmas staff rota, leading to his inability to run the prison, and his subsequent replacement. Finkelstein argues that the governor's appointed task was to degrade the prison from "a tough place for hard men to a closed training prison. In attempting to accomplish this task the governor was made "strange" and in the process orchestrated his own degradation" (Finkelstein 1996: 682). As we shall see, a similar process is at work in Seni Silat Haqq Melayu with the collapse of the authority of Pa' Ariffin when he shifted his attention from Seni Silat Haqq Melayu to Silat Gayong Malaysia U.K.

was not entirely a flop resulted in significant financial losses, ferocious outbursts of temper and yet more schism. Later, Pa' Ariffin was to go on to take a minor role in the big-budget Malaysian film, called *Puteri Gunung Ledang: A Legendary Love* (2004), which cemented his career as an actor, and returned him to the big screen, a screen that he had disavowed years earlier.

Deviationist Religious Cults

The bloody 13 May 1969 race riots between the Malays and the Chinese preceded a resurgence of *silat* movements across Malaysia (Shamsul 1997: 212). Although he does not go into detail, Shamsul links the "reemergence of Islamic-oriented, millenarian-inclined, martial art (*silat*) cult groups" to "the first phase" of the rise of the *dakwah* movement (Shamsul 1997: 212–215), a revivalist Islamic movement which was developed further by Muslim university students through the formation of ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia).[11]

This development of *dakwah* (lit. to summon or to call to Islam) Shamsul dubs "the reawakening period (1969–1974)" (Shamsul ibid.). Shamsul shows how the *dakwah* movement subsequently went through three more stages, including "the forward movement period (1975–1979)" where students returning from scholarships to the Middle East led the movement to become increasingly radical; followed by "the mainstreaming period (1989–1990)," where the leaders of the movement (such as Anwar Ibrahim) and their ideals are incorporated into mainstream politics. This incorporation led to the widespread dissemination of a moderate version of the *dakwah* movement. The result was the inculcation of an overt, self-righteous, and politicized Islam, clearly visible through the ever-increasing adoption of the "mini *telekung*," a headscarf for women that covers the hair, neck and the chest (Shamsul 1997: 217). The fourth stage, "the industrial period," that proceeded from 1990, is where the Malaysian government's successful response to the *dakwah* movement paid off in terms of booming trade relations with Iran and other nations in the Middle East.

To control the *dakwah* movement the Malaysian government must define its position and trajectory, and oppose those nonhegemonic *dakwah* elements it deems extreme or deviationist. By the year 2000, The Islamic Development Department of Malaysia (Jakim) had compiled a list of 125 so-called "deviationist" religious cults which are said to move "about the country as *silat* groups or as people imparting lessons on the art of self-defence."[12] These groups include the "Qadiani, Taslim, [a] movement spreading the teachings of Hussein Anak Rimau, Budi Suci," Nasrul

[11] As Shamsul points out "*dakwah* is an Arabic word meaning salvation, including evangelical activity" (Shamsul 1994: 101). See also Mutalib (1993). Kessler (1986) discusses the acrimonious dispute between Shamsul (1983) and Nagata (1980, 1984) concerning the *dakwah* phenomenon.

[12] Jakim Research Division Director, Mustafa Abdul Rahman, quoted in *The Straits Times*, 18 July 2000.

Haq,[13] and Al-Ma'unah.[14] Adherents, once identified and captured, are sent for rehabilitation at the Islamic Faith Rehabilitation Centre (*The Straits Times*, 18 July 2000). *Silat* groups were also involved in the training of Jamaah Islamiah, the Southeast Asian branch of Al-Qaeda, shown on television news clips performing *loi* (a sideways jumping technique found in *silat*). To offset accusations of "deviationism" Singaporean *silat gayong* instructors discontinued their practice of the ordeal by boiling oil when they heard reports that Al Qaeda operatives underwent the ritual as part of their training.

Elsewhere, Shamsul notes that it is important to distinguish "the longstanding Sufi groups, such as the *naskhsyabandiah school*, [who] have also sometimes been hastily and mistakenly categorized as one of the recently formed *dakwah* groups" (Shamsul 1994: 104). Nagata (2004: 105) briefly discusses the Naqshbandi Sufi *tarekat* in Malaysia in an article on "alternative models of Islamic governance," focusing primarily on the "*dakwah* ('call to the faith')" movement, specifically on the Al Arqam (previously the Darul Arqam) group, which was officially banned as deviationist by the Malaysian authorities in 1994. She states that "rumors described the existence of martial arts training camps and militias in Southern Thailand, where Asha'ari [the leader] maintained a residence" (Nagata 2004: 110). Nagata says that Al Arqam spread though the creation of polygynous kinship networks (2004: 101). Given its community-based provision of social, religious, educational, welfare, and economic programs and opportunities, Nagata asks if it is appropriate to consider Al Arqam as "theoretically, running a mini-Islamic state" (2004: 113).

Nagata (2004: 113) briefly considers several possible models for such an Islamic state from the Middle East and from the seventh century CE city-state of Medina, and notes the exemplary living in alternative religious communities has the potential to demoralize "incumbent political regimes" and that this is "disturbing" to the authorities. Nagata concludes by mentioning the traditional diasporic and proselytizing function of Sufi *tarekat*, and says that: "It may be tempting, further, for outsiders to view these linkages as an infrastructure which may opportunistically serve, on occasion, as a conduit for less quiescent activities, including terrorism. In a post-9/11 climate, there is always the temptation, looking backwards at such networks, to see more teleology, conspiracy, or militancy, and to tar all Islam with the same subversive caricature." Although Nagata makes several references to the Naqshbandi Sufis under Sheikh Nazim, in this article she mainly reworks and repackages old material concerning Al Arqam. Furthermore, her message regarding the Naqshbandi Sufi *tarekat* is not clear: are they an alternative form of governance, or merely a religious movement?

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[13] For an account of Nasrul Haqq see Nagata (1980: 433–434; 1984: 64–69).

[14] Al-Ma'unah are also known as the Al-Ma'unah arms heist gang, so-called because they raided a military armoury on 2 July 2000 and stole more than one hundred assault rifles, grenade launchers and ammunition. Before surrendering after a tense five-day standoff the group killed two of its four hostages (*The Straits Times*, 13 July 2000. "Al-Arqam Cult Back Under Different Name"). According to the police, the Al-Ma'unah cult were terrorists who planned a violent uprising to overthrow Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad's government (*The Straits Times*, 12 July 2000. "Cult's Killings Go Against Islam").

It is well known that in former times the Sultans' power in part stemmed from their power within Islam, where they could be considered the Shadow of God on earth (Milner 1981: 53–54). In the modern era of capitalist state formation in Malaysia the power of the Sultans is curtailed (except as regards religious matters), but that of the aristocracy is emasculated. It is in the climate of an increasingly self-confident Malay middle-class, bolstered by the government's special assistance for Malay economic development, and its co-option of a religious *dakwah* ideology, that the marginalized former aristocracy must operate.

Note on Organization

This account is organized into four parts that roughly correspond to the terms double, echo, reflection, and shadow. Broadly speaking I use the term "reflections" to refer to the performance ethnography and to the discussion of anthropological theory, "echoes" to provide a linkage between performance and cosmology, "doubles" to describe the mimesis and alterity of the *guru silat* and their students and the relation of social to aesthetic drama, and most importantly "shadows" which relates to the Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufi Order and to Malay "animism," specifically in terms of calling the shades of the dead. Because one term can sometimes be substituted for another their placement is somewhat arbitrary; yet doubles, echoes, reflections, and shadows convey a theme that pervades *silat* and Southeast Asian culture.

Before proceeding further the "tain of the mirror," by which I mean the research methods and my role as an ethnographer need to be outlined.[15] The *tain* of the mirror is the reflective backing placed on the back surface of the glass, and this is an apposite metaphor to apply to ethnographic practice, because the finished result may conceal the ethnographer, and the artifice of style, presenting the reflection as if the ethnographer were invisible. To defray this artifice somewhat, wherever possible I have tried to adopt a self-reflexive experiential stance (Barbash and Taylor 1997: 31–33).

Entry to the Group

My initial entry into the group occurred in 1996 after I saw an advert for black-belt training in the gymnasium of Middlesex University.[16] I turned up to winter class and spent an evening rolling around the floor on mats. After two sessions Pa' Ariffin

[15] I adapted the notion of "the tain of the mirror" from Gasche (1986).

[16] I first began training martial arts in England at the age of eight in the 1970s. Later I studied Chow's Family Praying Mantis Kung Fu as an indoor student under *Sifu* Paul Whitrod from 1988–1996. An "indoor student" trains full-time, and teaches instead of paying for classes: adopted by the master, they are taught beyond the regular syllabus. Normally I would train three to five

invited me to St Ann's Mosque to train. When I arrived I could not find the hall, so I asked for directions and was told to ascend the spiral staircase all the way to the top. At the apex of the tower a conclave of bearded men in long robes stood clustered together in a small room. One turned to me with a stern look on his face.[17] Gripping my hand and peering deep into my eyes he asked my name and my business, and to my reply of my name and "I'm here to learn *silat*," he said "welcome Douglas." From here I found my way to the hall, and joined in a class of about twenty-five students adopting the low postures of *silat* in the dark. Only a shard of light entered the hall from a nearby doorway.

At the end of the class the lights were switched on and I was asked to spar with the two foremost male students. The first, Khalid, had been a monkey style kung fu boxer for twelve years previous to sixteen months or more training with Pa' Ariffin. He was a tricky opponent with a powerful reverse back-kick and a way of disrupting my stance by coming in close and then jerking his hips, but his moves were repetitive and soon gauged. After a while I saw an opening and placed him in a single arm and shoulder lock, and just as I was about to deliver a hammer-hand blow to the back of his now prone head, the *guru silat* roared "stop!"[18] Next I fought Bernard; Khalid's senior in training time, though younger and fitter. His method of fighting looked more like *silat*, but he was inexperienced in close-quarter combat. I hooked his outstretched right kicking leg with my left arm, and seized his windpipe with my right hand. The finish is to rupture the larynx and tread heavily on the opponent's foot with a simultaneous push to the floor to break the ankle of the pinned left foot. Instead I released him, bowed, and that was the end of that. Why did I stay to train with these people? One reason was that I sensed that I could learn something new and different from the agonistic martial arts I was used to. Moreover, I was especially keen to learn the renowned Malay martial arts footwork which I had previously seen mixed with Hung Gar kung fu. So from December 1996 to April 1998 I trained *silat* with Pa' Ariffin in London, four or five times per week, and on my own every day for one to three hours.

Subsequently, I have had so many entries into and exits from the group that it is impossible to summarize them all. For the most part Pa' Ariffin treated me with respect, and extended a warm friendship, especially when I first visited Malaysia in 1999, and met him at the *zawiya* (Sufi lodge) in Kuala Lumpur. Except for the time I knocked out the European *silat* champion, Abdul Rahman, in a match in 1998, I have never fought any of his other students. During training I was partnered with Chief, a diminutive adolescent, for the next two years, and irrespective of my

hours daily. On the day of my "graduation" my instructor told me to study another martial art, and explore it thoroughly before returning. After some deliberation, I took up *silat*. Hence this project may be viewed in relation to the anthropology of experience (Laderman 1994; Turner and Bruner 1986; Turner et al. 1992).

[17] I realized later that this was Shaykh Kabbani, the son-in-law of Shaykh Nazim, and one of the leaders of the Haqqani Order.

[18] This hammer-hand strike (*gau choi*) derives from Chow's Family Praying Mantis Kung Fu.

intense entry into the group I did subsequently manage to make friends with most of the students. So, to sum up this brief autobiographical sketch it could be said that instead of going native I have gone anthropologist.

The Fieldwork

I was immersed in *silat* and lived in "the Malay world" from 1996 until 2007 (Benjamin 2003). Fieldwork in Malaysia specifically with or concerning Pa' Ariffin and Seni Silat Haqq took place over several visits totalling about nine months. Due to my teaching commitments, and Pa' Ariffin's own busy international travelling schedule, this fieldwork occurred sporadically, over periods of time ranging from weekends to several months at a time, from 1999 to 2003.[19] The fieldwork was multi-sited, predominantly urban, and explored *silat* in Malay as well as non-Malay contexts. From 1999 until 2006 data was collected in several locations including Janda Baik, Kuala Lumpur, London, Melaka, Penang, The Perhentian Islands and Singapore. I collected data from several different styles of *silat* (*peguruan*) including Seni Silat Haqq Melayu (London), two schools of Silat Seni Gayong Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur), Silat Kuntao Melaka (Malaysia and Singapore), Silat Seni Gayong Pasak (Malaysia and Singapore), Silat Al-Haq (Malaysia and Singapore), Silat Harimau (London), Silat Siluman Harimau (Riau Archipelago and Singapore), Silat Lok Sembilan (Kuala Lumpur), Silat Cimande, Silat Grasio, Silat Macan, and Silat Setia Hati in Singapore. I have also examined *silat* in a sport context, and interviewed participants from many different styles, with participants hailing from local and international backgrounds. However, my intention is not to provide a broad survey of *silat* (no doubt an interesting project in Malaysia), but to understand a *silat* group in its relationship to the community who partake of it, and with whom it interacts. This has taken me into the field of the Haqqani Sufi Order, concerning which I have gathered a considerable amount of field data, due to Pa' Ariffin's close connection to the Shaykhs.

This ethnography is primarily based upon Seni Silat Haqq Melayu. However, one case cannot be understood outside of its relation to others within a cultural field, so from the initial stages of the research I cast my sampling net as wide as possible. I used the method of snowball sampling and for the purposes of validity

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[19] Specifically, I was with Pa' Ariffin for six weeks from December 1999 to January 2000, and again for several weeks in March, July, and December 2000. For most of May and June 2001 I stayed with Pa' Ariffin whilst participating in an accelerated course in Silat Seni Gayong Malaysia, under Cikgu Kahar of Nirwana Gelanggang, and Cikgu Ezhar (from his home). In 2002, I twice visited London for the purposes of data collection, for five weeks. During 2003, I spent three months in Malaysia, though only half of that time directly with Pa' Ariffin. It is impossible to say exactly how much time I spent with *guru silat* Mohammad Din Mohammad as we were friends. Din lived nearby and we stayed in touch from 2002 until he died in 2006.

conducted crosschecks with *guru silat* from different *peguruan* (as recommended by Agar 1996; Babbie 2001; Becker 1998; Pelto 1970). During the initial phase of the research Pa' Ariffin was my key consultant and he often provided additional data through emails, chat-rooms and telephone conversations. Pa' Ariffin regularly read through my manuscripts, sometimes laughing with delight; other times snorting with derision, saying "this is fantastic, where the hell did you get this stuff from?"

My main sample includes nine *guru silat*.[20] Some prefer to be called *cikgu* (teacher); others *pak* (uncle). It seems to me, to adapt Turner's (1988: 44–45) "star group" notion, that the *guru silat* is a kind of "star identity."[21] By this I mean that the *guru silat* is a key "traditional" Malay role through which liminal discourses of Malay social and personal identity are constructed, negotiated and contested. The *guru silat* occupy a variety of roles stretching across categories from the feudal Royal bodyguard (*hulubalang*) to the *bomoh*.[22] The *bomoh* category itself may be subdivided into various groups, such as the *tukang bekam* (specialist in blood letting), and the *tukang urut* (masseur), but may also be conceptualized in different terms as *dukun* or *pawang* (here used as an equivalent to *bomoh jampi* or herbalist and medical specialist using magic spells). My interest is primarily with the ritual practices of the *bomoh-silat* (Werner 1986: 22–39), but it should also be borne in mind that *silat* appears in other Southeast Asian performance genres such as the *kuda kepang* (the hobby horse dance), emerging into the modern roles of sports professional, special forces trainer, commercial wedding entertainer and the professional artist.[23] Whilst any one *guru silat* does not perform all these roles, the roles demonstrate their spheres of activity, and give an idea of the range of interpenetrating roles available.

By examining the social identities of various *guru silat* a composite picture can be produced. This composite, whilst not existing in real life, does seem to offer some useful boundaries helpful in defining the *guru silat*. All of the *guru silat* have knowledge and experience of the main roles—it is a question of how much emphasis an individual places on a particular role and the recognition the individual receives from the community. Rashid however points out that in the Malay village the *imam, guru silat*, and *shaman* belong to different traditions and schools

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[20] Whilst taking an instructor's course in *silat* I also met and trained daily with forty Singaporean and Indonesian *silat* instructors and their senior students for three weeks in Singapore in July–August 2001.

[21] A "star group" is characterized by highly intensive relations as "the group one most desires to belong to and enjoys belonging to" (Turner 1988: 44–45). Turner (ibid.) differentiates the star group from the primary group, in-group, reference group, membership group, friendship group and kinship group.

[22] For Turner "A mystical character is assigned to the sentiment of humankindness in most types of liminality, and in most cultures this stage of transition is brought closely in touch with beliefs in the protective and punitive powers of divine or preterhuman beings or powers" (Turner 1969: 105).

[23] Regarding *kuda kepang* see Burridge (1961) and Heinze (1988: 235).

of learning; they are specialists maintaining different and potentially explosive spheres of power and authority (Rashid 1990: 92). According to Rashid:

> *Silat* … [is] … more private and cult-like, involving the mastery of animistic, Hindu and Islamic ideas of spiritualism and supernaturalism, and the *Imam* more public and open, involving the mastery of principles, statutes of the Koran, and Hadith. Again, the *guru silat* may have certain rituals in common with the *bomoh* (shaman or medicine man) in the evocation of dead humans, animistic or Hindu spirits, and in the use of similar ritual items like the lemon, black and yellow cloth, and myrrh (*kemian*). However, he differs significantly from the latter in his dependency on group learning and a formal tutelage system. Shamans and folk medical practitioners pass on their special knowledge and skills to certain members of their immediate family and kin only but have the whole village as their clientele. In contrast the *guru silat* selects his clientele very carefully after providing the opportunity to everyone to go through the training (Rashid 1990: 92–3).

I find Rashid's differentiation between the *guru silat* and the *bomoh* to have been too sharply drawn. Perhaps the division is breaking down with the onset of urbanization and modernity and with the increasingly marginalized and now possibly anti-structural roles of the *guru silat* and *bomoh* being drawn closer together, in contrast to the mainstream structural role of the *imam*. A bridge across this divide may be formed where the *guru silat* is also an *imam* from a Sufi order, as in the case of Pa' Ariffin.

On the other hand, perhaps the difference is not necessarily always as clear-cut as Rashid's ideal type suggests. For example, Rashid says that the *guru silat* differs significantly from the *bomoh* in his "dependency on group learning and a formal tutelage system" (ibid.). I would agree that this is often the case, yet *silat* masters also resort to less formal, less rationalised, and more individual methods for instruction and may themselves acquire their knowledge of *silat* through magical, religious or mystical means. For example, *guru silat* Wak Sarin, a master of five Indonesian styles of *silat*, created s*ilat siluman harimau* (evil tiger style) after shutting himself up in a remote cave in an island in the Riau Archipelago for several months. Through prayer, ritual, fasting alongside the summoning of the evil tiger the *silat* moves "just came to him" (Masri, from fieldnotes). Like Wak Sarin, some other *guru silat* I know will only teach members of their family, and say that in former times their styles were only taught to family members (yet with the Malay practice of consanguineous marriage, polygyny and the extended family the Malay family could span most of the village).

The issue is further complicated by problems of defining whether a *bomoh* is a "shaman," and if so, which type or types. Here a distinction between the "medical shaman" and the "warrior shaman" could prove useful, though it is clear that the roles to some extent overlap and duplicate one another. Some shamans prefer to be called *pawang* due to the negative connotations of being labelled a *bomoh*.[24] The

[24] Wilkinson (1906: 77) translates *pawang* as "wizard" and (to paraphrase) says that the *pawang* is formerly the lineal representative of the interests of Siva, otherwise known as Bĕtara Guru (Siva the teacher), but that *pawang* is now used of all practitioners who use the formulae of old religions in their occupations, such as the fisherman or trapper.

main issue concerns trance, which for a shaman is essential, whereas for Muslims this state, like intoxication, is taboo (*haram*). Sometimes the nomenclature *tabib* is used by the *guru silat* as a disguise behind which the *bomoh* or *pawang* shelters. It is tricky to tease these categories apart because some of the *guru silat* profess to be *bomoh* and *tabib*, others to be *pawang* and *tabib* and so forth. The *guru silat* practises are complex. Like shamans they heal through séance, spells, prayers, herbal treatments, massage, and bloodletting, but like sorcerers they summon "supernatural" entities, animal spirits and the souls of the dead. This is compounded with the substitution of ancient Malay magical spells for readings from the Holy Quran in the machinations of death dealing magic, love magic, and invulnerability magic. To adumbrate this complexity I employ the term "war magician," as an umbrella for "warrior shaman" and "warrior sorcerer" respectively.

Given Malinowski's (1948) hypothesis that magic is seen in situations of chance and uncertainty and Turner's (1969) claim that mystical powers coalesce around liminal roles one would expect to see magic linked to martial arts.[25] Fighting is a risky business, and warriors (*pendekar*) and *hulubalang* are by definition liminal figures standing between life and death.[26] From this perspective it is unremarkable that the *guru silat*, akin to Winstedt's [1925] (1993) "magician," can similarly be configured on a spectrum from Sufi, shaman, to sorcerer, or from *tabib, pawang*, to *bomoh*.

Magical roles are difficult to sustain nowadays given the pariah status modern Islam in Malaysia and Singapore attaches to so-called "Islamic deviation." However, there is still a demand from the Malay community for the services of *guru silat* in a *bomoh* (indigenous healer) capacity. For example, *guru silat* Samat is regularly called to deal with cases of possession (*rasuk*). Upon arriving at a house in the middle of the night *guru silat* Samat found upset parents who said that their son was possessed. He examined the son, who was hiding in the toilet, and then proceeded to slap him hard. Eventually the son confessed that his spasms and convulsions were withdrawal symptoms from his addiction to heroin, a condition unknown to his parents, but readily apparent to *guru silat*

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[25] Malinowski said: "Again, in warfare the natives know that strength, courage, and agility play a decisive part. Yet here also they practice magic to master the elements of chance and luck" (Malinowski 1948: 14).

[26] Sir Hugh Clifford, the former Pahang Resident, provides the following description of the Malay *hulubalang*: "In every Independent Malay State there is a gang of fighting men which watches over the person of the King and acts as his bodyguard. It is recruited from the sons of the chiefs, nobles and men of the well-bred classes; and its members follow at the heels of the King whenever he goes abroad, paddle his boat, join with him in the chase, gamble unceasingly, do much evil in the King's name, slay all who chance to offend him, and flirt lasciviously with the girls within the palace. They are always ready for anything, 'from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter,' and no Malay King has to ask twice in their hearing, 'Will nobody rid me of this turbulent enemy?' Their one aim in life is to gain the favour of their master and, having won it, to freely abuse their position" (Clifford [1897] 1989: 145–146).

Samat (a former prison officer). Whether or not the result of the operation is to prove "supernatural" forces (or in this case not) is irrelevant, the point here is that certain behaviour is treated as if it were caused through "supernatural" agency, and appropriate measures are taken to counter it through the procurement of the services of the *guru silat*.

Performance Ethnography

Aside from "mild participation" in exoteric activities Evans-Pritchard spurned participation in esoteric life, which among the Azande would mean becoming a witchdoctor, because:

> Previous experience of participation in activities of this kind has led me to the conclusion that an anthropologist gains little by obtruding himself into the ceremonies as an actor, for a European is never seriously regarded as a member of an esoteric group and has little opportunity of checking to what extent a performance is changed for his benefit, by design or by the psychological responses of the participants to the rites being affected by his presence. It is, moreover difficult to use the ordinary methods of critical investigating when one is actually engaged in ceremonial and is supposed to be an eager member of an institution (Evans-Pritchard [1937] 1977: 151).

However, my research is the result of a "performance ethnography," an idea inspired by Zarrilli's (1998) book on the Indian martial art *kalarippayattu*. Performance ethnography requires the full participation of the researcher in the performance genre. For Zarrilli (1998: 255 n6), following the postmodern turn in anthropology, culture is not considered a passive entity "out there" waiting to be collected, a pristine entity that may remain unsullied by the presence of the anthropologist. Zarrilli, following Fabian (1990: 18) says that performance ethnography refers to the way people realize their culture through a fluid process of creating meaning, of cultural praxis, and is "an appropriate metaphor for an epistemology of ethnography, where 'ethnography is essentially, communicative or dialogical; conversational, not observation'" (Zarrilli 1998: 255 n6). Zarrilli also points out that tourists visiting *kalari* (training grounds) in South India were "as likely to see one or more westerners training as they were to see Malayalis—a fact not always appreciated when taking photographs or videotapes of "natives" practising a "traditional" art (Zarrilli 1998: 22–23).

In today's cosmopolitan environment perhaps Evans-Pritchard could enrol in a class in Azande magic in North London, where no doubt his ordinary methods of critical investigating would no longer be applicable. For Malinowski (1948: 123) to conduct anthropological fieldwork it is not sufficient to sip whisky on the veranda whilst interviewing the "natives," and correspondingly I would say that it is insufficient to just to hang around the village, or in Malaysian contexts, drink coffee in the coffee-shop (*kopitiam*).[27] Instead Malinowski recommended the full immersion

[27] See Provencher (1971: 141) on the coffee shop ethos.

of the anthropologist into the "native" culture. In a postmodern context this one way immersion is no longer considered viable as each individual is recognized as immersed or at least implicated in the power structures and representations of the international cosmopolitan order. Hence new methods are required to supplement the old in anthropological inquiry.

Ethical Guidelines

Ethical guidelines for social research hinge on three principles: minimal risk, informed consent, and the right to privacy, and these principles apply to the collection of data and to its subsequent dissemination. Due to the dangers of participation in martial arts performance ethnography, minimal risk meant not getting injured, and not harming those I trained with, which is an important criterion when you are knife training and continually being tested in an oppressive boot-camp environment. It also means not openly or directly revealing material the consultants would prefer I kept concealed, data that includes though is not limited to "dirty data" (van Maanen 1982, in Thomas and Marquart 1987: 2).

In 1999 I carried out a brief period of covert research on Seni Silat Haqq Melayu in Janda Baik, but was soon convinced by my friend Dr. Ellis Finkelstein that this approach suffers from more drawbacks than advantages, and that to adopt an overt approach would be more effective.[28] The Seni Silat Haqq Melayu group is highly secretive, but the advantage of an overt approach is that once people knew I was doing research they would admit things to me furtively, out of sight and earshot, although sometimes they would beg me not to reveal or repeat what they had said.

To gain informed consent I provided a brief description of the research topic to the *guru silat* and their students. The following snippet from my fieldnotes occured immediately after I announced to one of the (former) Seni Silat Haqq Melayu instructors that I intended to do a research project on *silat*:

> Khalid: (his face clouding over): "This camp is about obeying the rules."
> Me: "Are the rules written down? [pause] And if not, how do people know them?"
> Khalid: "Anyone who does the *silat* knows what the rules are already. What is the rule and what is not the rule. The rule is quite simple. We don't do nothing. Follow bosses rules or next guy. I don't say nothing on subjects I have no permission of. No comment" (Khalid, from fieldnotes).

Several of Khalid's *silat* students gave similarly grim responses; but only one refused to be part of the data set. Colin swore, and laughed in my face. However,

[28] Covert ethnography is considered unethical, and informants tend to get suspicious. For example, LaVey, the Ipsisimus (head Satanist) of a California Satanic group, told Alfred (1976), when the latter eventually approached him with a confession of carrying out covert research, that he had known about it all along, and that he considered this to be the appropriate satanic thing to do. Furthermore, after covert ethnography the researcher must still attain permission to use the data (Babbie 2001).

Pa' Ariffin and his wife were pleased with the idea, and took me to see Shaykh Raja Ashman to seek his permission. Duly permission was granted, with this caveat from Shaykh Raja Ashman: "The most important thing is respect." Gaining "permission" to conduct this study from the elite, particularly from Pa' Ariffin, Shaykh Raja Ashman, and from Shaykh Nazim, was essential (if not always sufficient) to gain information from those lower down the authority chain, because a cult-like obedience principle restricts the disclosure of information. This is in accord with the fundamental pedagogic principle of *silat*—that the teacher will only reveal knowledge at his or her pace and not at the request of the student. Informants were given the option to disguise their identity, by adopting a pseudonym of their choice, but only two chose this route and hence this account employs the informants' real names unless otherwise indicated. Consultants were informed that they could withdraw individually provided data and withhold specific information upon request. Nobody was asked to sign anything: to request this sort of official written permission slip goes against the anti-official ethos of the entire ensemble.[29]

It might be objected that I have sketched a peculiar view of Malay Muslims, who prefer to be "represented" in a more orthodox Islamic way. To such critics I would reply that the Sufi *guru silat* is hardly an ordinary person anyway: possessed of extraordinary skills and abilities, they regard Islam as divided into four levels of learning that one must go through, yet co-exist within simultaneously, to accomplish a mystical state of transcendence (see Chapter 4). Hence *guru silat* would regard these critics as at a lower level of religiosity. Here, of course, I am speaking of the self-avowed traditionalist *guru silat*, and not the secular sports coach (Farrer 2006a: 26 n3).

Recording Data

In theory, I wanted to write the fieldnotes unobtrusively, alone, and type up the data into my laptop during the night, and just make the occasional note in a small notebook when in the field. However, as I lived mostly in the house of the *guru silat* and his family, and shared a bedroom, private note taking was impossible. To compound this, most of the time we slept after three in the morning, only to rise again before dawn. Hence alongside the occasional note in my small book, I would write lengthy notes after the training sessions in a large notebook, and type up any remaining data from the day before the following morning. This meant that I was sometimes typing or writing as people were engaging in routine activity around me, and thus I managed to record entire conversations, almost verbatim. One of the problems with notetaking was that the informants often wanted to know what others had said previously, and sometimes it proved difficult to stop them from grabbing my book to read it. Of course, there was always the potential that they could feed me material

[29] Shaykh Nazim and Shaykh Kabbani urge their followers not to be "official" (officious).

that they wanted me to record, in order to channel me in any particular direction, but this disadvantage is offset by the scope and size of the record, which extends to 450 single-spaced typed pages. Aside from these notes, and the several hundred photographs that I took, I recorded emails, mobile phone text messages, telephone conversations, and gleaned data from website discussion forums.[30]

Whenever practicable I used a Sony semi-pro digital video camera to document my observations, and I recorded fifty-five hours concerning *silat*, including rituals, practice, rehearsals and theatre. I filmed some everyday activity, but not as much as I would have liked, as the camera can be overly intrusive, except for events where "the tourist gaze" is considered appropriate (Urry 2002). My informants would not accept "the camera . . . deployed as an impartial instrument in the service of science, fixing all that is fleeting for infinite future analysis" (Barbash and Taylor 1997: 78), resulting in a kind of unselective, unstructured, and objective research footage, but they did not seem to mind an "observational style" at *silat* classes, religious or ritual events, although sometimes students wondered why I wasn't pointing the camera in the "right" direction, or taking photographs of the same things as they were. I tried to compromise by taking some of the pictures they liked (both still and video), but mainly I simply tried to capture footage that interested me, including sometimes just the general flow of activity.

With the use of a Sennheiser torpedo microphone mounted on the camera I soon discovered that I was able to pick up speech at a distance of twenty-five meters, as well as whispered magical formulae taped without the sorcerer's knowledge. Although Cikgu Ezhar allowed me to film his ritual activity, both he and I were surprised that the microphone picked up his whispers, and because I told him this he explained the Silat Seni Gayong Malaysia lime cutting ritual to me (see Chapter 7). It is one thing to film, observe, describe, and perform—it is entirely something else to gain an indigenous explanation. I also found that the normal microphone fitted to the camera allowed me to tape dialogue, whether or not I was filming, with a simple flick of the switch, and in this way I would record long Malay monologues, or several people speaking simultaneously, providing thick descriptive data impossible to note by hand (Geertz 1973). My wife Julie, herself Malay, would later translate any speech I could not comprehend, and together we would sift and discuss the materials.

Interpreting Data

Apart from Julie—who sometimes accompanied me to collect data from female informants—other members of her family regularly provided me with assistance in understanding deep Malay concepts, sentiments and artefacts. Two of her uncles are *guru silat*, one for *silat gayong*, the other for several Javanese styles of *silat*;

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[30] For example, Pa' Ariffin's forum <http://www.silat.f9.co.uk/mainmenu3.htm> and that of *guru silat* O'Ong Maryono <http://www.kpsnusantara.com/cgi-bin/yabb/YaBB.cgi>.

and sometimes one or other of them would accompany me into the field, visiting Melaka and Kuala Lumpur, and even participating with me in the *mandi minyak*. Without this family, among whom I lived for six years, my understanding of *silat* would be very different. From the outset, they viewed Pa' Ariffin's performance of *silat*, as captured on film, witnessed in person, and seen through his students, in a different way than I did. I had thought Pa' Ariffin's performance excellent, but to their eyes it was barely average. This lesson was brought home to me forcefully on the day of my wedding in 2001. In the morning, upon waking, Julie said: "All the *silat* you have done so far is little better than nothing." I found her comment quite insulting given that I had learned two styles of *silat* already.[31] However, when one of her uncles "welcomed me to the family" with a performance of wedding *silat*, demonstrating superb skill to the crack of *kompang* (drums), I saw exactly what she meant. This, however, is another story, mentioned here only because they made me seriously question my way of seeing *silat* and the Malay world.

Methods to Lift the Veil of Secrecy

One of the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad is "keep what you are doing secret" (Kabbani 2004: 87, italics removed). To lift the veil of secrecy in the study of Seni Silat Haqq Melayu I needed to utilize methods that went beyond performance ethnography as a consultative and dialogical enterprise (Zarrilli 1998: 255 n6, following Fabian 1990: 18). The most difficult aspect of the fieldwork was not learning *silat*, but being placed in the tricky position of a researcher being compelled to ask no questions. One of Pa' Ariffin's most memorable lines, that operated as a glowering injunction against questions of any sort was that "I, my, and why, are from Shaytan" (Fig. 1.2).

In other words, it is Satanic to ask questions, and Satanic to propose—let alone live by—a discreet model of the self. So much for dialogical consultation.[32] Pa' Ariffin

[31] I have learned bits and pieces from many *silat* styles and have been given permission to teach three. First, on 17 December 1997 after two years of full-time training in Seni Silat Haqq Melayu, I was invited to teach the style. During 1998 I took private lessons in Silat Lima Beradik (in Singapore), graduating with a ritual feast (*kenduri*) and the gift of a Malay knife (*keris*). Together with Pa' Ariffin I undertook an accelerated instructor's course with Silat Seni Gayong in Malaysia in 2001. In the same year I took and passed an instructor's course in Singapore in *silat olahraga* (sport *silat*). *Silat olahraga* is a modern composite comprised of four sets of movements consisting of techniques drawn from Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore. In 2002 I took lessons in Pencak Silat Cimande and Silat Grasio. In Malaysia, in 2003, I studied Silat Kuntao Melaka, (a codename for the banned Seni Silat Hulubalang Melaka), and returned to Silat Seni Gayong to learn more knife fighting (*buah pisau*). Since 2002 I have been learning *silat* taught to me in secret by elders of my wife's family. Aside from this over the past six years I have observed hundreds of commercial *silat* classes, watched eighty-eight demonstrations of wedding *silat*, and interviewed over one hundred *silat* masters (*guru silat*), and their students in Malaysia and Singapore.

[32] The injunction against questions makes it pointless to attempt a survey approach (questionnaires or structured interviews) to Seni Silat Haqq Melayu, after the style of Barker (1984) who,

Fig. 1.2 Pa' Ariffin and his son Yeop

went on to sternly pronounce that to question the *guru silat* runs counter to Malay *adab* (respect).[33] Like Metcalf's (2002: 34) aristocratic informant Kasi who flatly prohibited anyone from discussing the death songs with him and thus attempted to sabotage his research whilst at the same time playing the role of key informant, Pa' Ariffin was bane and boon, friend and foe to my investigations.

Pa' Ariffin's injunction against questions did not worry me overly because I had taken to heart some advice Whyte [1943] (1993) offers concerning not asking questions in *Street Corner Society*. Whilst doing participant observation in a gambling den Whyte was silent for so long that he felt he had to say something, anything; so he asked the chief gangster (from memory) "So, I suppose you've paid off the police then?" The gangster was stunned, and Whyte had to beat a quick exit. Doc, Whyte's "key informant" later said to him: "Don't ask any of those who, what, why, when, where questions." Afterwards Whyte realizes that: "As I sat and listened, I learned the answers to questions I would not even have had the sense to ask if I had been getting my information solely on an interviewing basis" (Whyte [1943] 1993).

Malay martial arts are sometimes deemed to be so secretive as to be beyond anthropological inquiry. For example, Faucher declares that more important than the "sacred" relation established between the *guru* and pupil, interfered with by others on pain of "immediate death by spiritual means [...] is the fact that these secret techniques should never be disclosed to members of outside groups" (1998: 79).

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after a twelve year ethnography surveyed Moonies, ex-Moonies, and those considering joining the Moonies to see if they joined out of free will (choice), or because of "brainwashing." The use of the survey approach to confirm ethnographic results is a popular adaptation by sociologists to anthropological field methods to attempt to ensure their social scientific reliability (Agar 1996; Alfred 1976; Babbie 2001; Pelto 1970). However, some anthropologists regard survey triangulation as simply evidence of weak ethnography and of sociological insecurity with the method.

[33] Malays can be notoriously stoical when it comes to outsiders. One famous American anthropologist confessed to me that: "We stayed in the village for eighteen months, and nobody would talk to us."

Faucher follows Rashid who notes that *silat* is traditionally a secret art taught only to Malays, and until recently was relatively unknown in the west. According to Rashid:

> Their relative seclusion from the outside world is a result of their close identity with the Malay animistic-Islamic traditions which perpetuate a series of cult-like ritualized activities designed to render these arts impenetrable to outsiders (Rashid 1990: 64).

Notwithstanding the monthly publication of Silat Beladiri, a *silat* magazine widely available in Peninsular Malaysia, and the broad dissemination of information regarding *silat* on the Internet, *guru silat* remain secretive with their arts, and choosy to whom they disseminate them.

However, the existence of secrets, and secret societies, does not *a priori* prohibit their analysis and explanation.[34] My way to deal with secrecy was to learn *silat*, and undergo initiation. Goffman (1959: 141–143) shows that there are different types of secrets, from easily obtainable "open secrets" to well-concealed "dark secrets." Dark secrets concern "facts about a team" which it knows and conceals, and which are inconsistent with the image of self that the team tries to maintain in front of its audience. These are also "double secrets" (one is the crucial fact that is hidden, and another is that crucial facts have not been openly admitted) and every effort may be made to keep these secrets forever. "Strategic secrets" refer to the intentions and capacities of a team, which it conceals from its audience to prevent them from adapting to the state of affairs that it is intending to bring about, for example, the strategic secrets of businesses and armies. However, these are usually revealed after some time (they are performance related). Goffman also discusses inside secrets, entrusted secrets, free secrets and latent secrets (Goffman 1959: 143–144). In the course of this research I have come across examples of most of the above types of secrets, some that I too must agree to keep. Significantly, there is a stock of "inside secrets," or "trade secrets" known to the *guru silat*.

The first thing to discover about secrets is that they exist, and once a "cultural field" of secrets can be established, they cease to be double secrets (Bourdieu 1990: 145). *Guru silat* Mohammad Din told me—after the fashion of Plato's dictum—that life is but remembering what you have already known, and that *guru silat* will not reveal anything that the student does not already know. I tackled this restriction through investigative reflexivity—by finding out a little from one source, and then taking it to another, and vice versa, and proceeded to assemble the pieces like

[34] For Evans-Pritchard to unearth secret lore via ethnography it must be understood that "the corporation [secret society] has an esoteric life from which the un-initiated are excluded" and that: "Not only are knowledge of medicines and tricks of the trade hidden from outsiders, but much of the inner social life of the corporation and many of its beliefs are unknown to them. The usual methods of inquiry were here largely ineffective and the ordinary systems of controls inoperative" (Evans-Pritchard [1937] 1977: 150). To address the "esoteric life" problem Evans-Pritchard [1937] (1977: 151) persuaded his personal servant to be initiated into the witch doctors' corporation, so that he could then tell him everything he learnt during the course of his tuition.

doing a jigsaw puzzle without the picture. I must admit that I was influenced by the findings of social psychology, for example, "the-foot-in-the-door tactic" where to gain compliance one requests something small before requesting something more significant (Hogg and Vaughan 2002: 212).

So much talk of secrecy alerted me to observe all the more carefully. Given the hot tempers of some of the members of Seni Silat Haqq group, Evans-Pritchard's point was cogent: "When informants fall out anthropologists come into their own" (Evans-Pritchard's [1937] 1977: 153).[35] Despite the fact that Islam prohibits alcohol, believed to be an intoxicant that makes the individual lose their sense of self in submission to God, another way I gained valuable data was by occasionally going out drinking with members of the group. Due to my long university apprenticeship their alcohol tolerance was generally lower than mine, and once tipsy they sometimes relinquished material that I could double-check later.[36] I gathered some great data from *guru silat* over pints of Guinness whilst "on holiday." However, even sober informants related supramundane phenomena such as seeing dragons, having fights with *jinn* and summoning shadows.[37] I would largely agree that it is important to "consider … life as it is lived rather than as it is reported on" (Barbash and Taylor 1997: 36). Finkelstein (1993: 9–10) in his ethnography of "the fortress" (Dartmoor Prison) found it necessary to privilege participant observation over the survey technique, because what people actually *do* is discrepant with what they *say* they do.[38] But in a way, what people say, and what they don't say, *is* what they do—Austin's (1975) "performative speech act" (and whatever its inverse would be).

The nature of social research is partial, not absolute. The issue of secrecy hinges on trust, and trust only develops over time with the development of a shared understanding. Where informants have requested that I keep data secret I have done so,

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[35] Evans-Pritchard is instructive in the matter of perseverance in the face of difficult ethnography. Upon arrival in Sudan, he travelled miles out into the Nuer territory, and made contact, whereupon his servants abandoned him in his tent (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 10).

[36] Islam prohibits alcohol as it is perceived to be an intoxicant that makes the individual lose their sense of self in submission to God.

[37] *Jinn* in Arabic, means "hidden." The *alam ghaib* includes spirits from the Islamic pantheon such as *jinn Islam* (good Muslim spirits), and *jinn kafir* (evil non-Muslim spirits), as well as indigenous Malay entities such as ghosts (*hantu*), faeries (*pari pari*), and vampires (*pontianak*). Chittick points out that: "In the Islamic intellectual tradition the Arabic words used to name the substance of these intermediate, fiery creatures can best be translated as 'image' (*mithâl*) or 'imagination' (*khayâl*). This does not mean that the *jinn* are 'imaginary'—far from it. In fact, they are more real than creatures made only from clay, since they possess more of the attributes of light, which are the attributes of true existence" (Chittick 1992: 133).

[38] Finkelstein's approach is influenced by La Peirre (1934: 230–237), who challenges (Weberian) claims that attitudes (the Protestant Ethic) dictate actions (capitalist behaviour). La Peirre visited 137 hotels, guesthouses and trailer parks in 1930s America accompanied by a Chinese couple. In a follow up survey La Peirre asked each establishment if they would serve Asian guests, and fifty percent (of those who replied) said they would not. However, La Peirre whilst on his travels with the Chinese couple had only been refused service once.

except where the same data was also revealed to me openly by others, which given the field of secrets was often the case. Certainly, many stones remain unturned, hieroglyphs undeciphered, spells (*jampi*) concealed, yet I hope to have "raised the veil just enough to let us catch a glimpse of the Medusa's head behind it" (Marx [1867] 1990: 91). In fairness however, the Medusa's head may be said to better characterize the accounts of the anthropologist, rather than, as we shall see, the dialogical mimesis and alterity, repetition and difference of the *guru silat*.

The Central Questions

What can the study of war magic reveal in the Malay context? In social anthropology, since Malinowski, war magic has been relatively neglected, especially when compared to the analysis of sorcery, shamanism, witchcraft, and the performance of healing, and this gap is readily apparent in the current Malaysianist anthropological literature. Hollan, in his review of Watson and Ellen's (1993) *Understanding Witchcraft and Sorcery in Southeast Asia*, raises some interesting questions concerning the directions of further research. Hollan writes that:

> As Ellen correctly points out, we know relatively little about Southeast Asian sorcery … Ellen summarizes what we do know … although … issues emerge that warrant further analysis. For example, why is most sorcery in Southeast Asia "defensive" in nature? What is it about these societies that lead so many people to feel vulnerable to outside forces, both human and supernatural, and thus to find it necessary to seek invulnerability and protection? Why are other humans and spiritual beings so often perceived to be stingy, envious, and angry? When sorcery does become more "offensive" in nature, why does it so often take the form of love magic, abetting efforts to find or to hold onto spouses and sexual partners? (Hollan 1995: 825).

Hollan does not directly mention "war magic" here and neither is it addressed in Watson and Ellen's edited volume, but it is implicit in Hollan's mention of "invulnerability and protection" (see Chapter 7). Recent ethnographic accounts have advanced our understanding of Malay shamans (*bomoh, pawang, dukun*) and their love magic, curing, and harming of others through sorcerous means. These accounts address the shaman in relation to issues of medical anthropology, specifically healing, often from perspectives that draw heavily from the anthropology of performance, embodiment and psychoanalysis (Laderman 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1994, 1995, 2000; Peletz 1993, 1996). Although these studies help to understand magic, sorcery, and shamanism in the region, they neglect war magic. Their main advance lies in the application of new perspectives, particularly embodiment and performance, but they primarily concern medical anthropology.[39]

[39] Even an account of "malign magic" in the Philippines has no discussion of war magic. Typically "data on sorcery were gathered as part of a broader study of social and cultural aspects of medicine in the Philippines" (Lieban 1967: 4).

My research project seeks to address the war magic lacuna by considering the embodied practice and performance of Islamic versions of the Malay martial art *silat* in relation to Malay magic and mysticism. In the polyglot Malay language the boundaries between magic and mysticism are not clear cut, with the term *mystik* (mysticism) used as a gloss for both magical and mystical doctrines, rituals, and practices. I use "Malay mysticism" to refer to esoteric ritual practices designed to empower the self, and to gain power over the world, and this includes the indigenous mysticism known as *kebatinan*, alongside ideas and practices derived from Sufism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and animism. The magical and mystical practices of *silat* go "beyond rationalism" (Kapferer 2003), such as the ritual where *silat* practitioners plunge their hands into cauldrons of boiling oil, an ordeal believed to provide empirical proof that divine intervention renders invulnerability.

Apart from secrecy, which has been proffered as a reason not to venture into the anthropology of *silat*, there may be institutional reasons for the failure of works on magical discourse to address martial arts. Compounding the Malinowskian avoidance of war magic, subsequent conceptual boundaries create difficulties for the academic purusal of *silat*. Initially I thought this may have arisen due to a narrow conceptualization of the term "shaman." Ethnographic studies of shamanism commonly employ the established anthropological notion that a shaman is someone who goes into trance, and who is primarily involved in some sort of healing through spiritual means (Eliade 1974; Halifax 1991; Heinze 1988; Lewis [1971] 2003). If this definition is accepted, it automatically precludes an analysis of the Malay Islamic war magician as a type of shaman, because Islamic *guru silat* are forbidden by religious prohibition from entering trance states. Hence the term "shaman" delimits the magical field to issues of trance and healing, to the exclusion of sorcery or war magic, that look from the outside to be more to do with the skills required to inflict pain and death than those required for healing. But as Mohammad Din Mohammad pointed out, the *guru silat* are always healers, and the healers always have *silat*, because "in the years that it takes to learn *silat* you will surely get injured."[40] Indeed, in many Asian societies the martial arts and indigenous medical practices were taught together. Furthermore, in earlier literature, Islamic *guru silat* are referred to as *bomoh-silat*, a concept which reveals the *guru silat* as a particular type of *bomoh* or indigenous healer, beaing in mind that *bomoh*'s are perceived to enter into trance which given the increasing Islamization of Malaysia nowadays provides the reason for the abandonment of the term (if not the occupation). Whilst Malay *guru silat* may not enter directly into trance, many engage in other mystical practices that act as a substitute. Hence, the study of war magic in the Malay context sheds further light upon Malay magic and mysticism, including issues of vulnerability, invulnerability, healing and protection.

However, this account is not restricted solely to "the Malays" or to the physical boundaries of Peninsular Malaysia as I have focused upon a transnational Sufi orga-

[40] For a detailed discussion of the life and work of Mohammad Din Mohammad see Farrer (2008).

nization in the process of spreading to the west. In sum, I refer to the totality of *silat*, comprised of elements drawn from Malay animism, magic, and Islamic mysticism, alongside the practice and performance of the dance-like movements, as *war magic*, a rubric under whose domain could be included warrior religion, warrior mysticism and the war sorcery of the martial arts.

War magic is the harnessing of mystical forces or *ilmu* (skill) for the purpose of combat in the seen and unseen realms. The resurrection of war magic drives a stake into the original and initial concerns of anthropology, namely magic and religion. Each chapter set out here tackles a set of issues that concern war magic, configured primarily though not exclusively in relation to Seni Silat Haqq Melayu, an organization that harnesses *silat* to the Haqqani Sufi *tarekat*. Before further examining these questions I proceed to examine the scope, etymology, mythical origin, and historical background of *silat* in Peninsular Malaysia.

The Field of Silat

Silat and variants of *silat* are found throughout "the Malay world" (Map 1.1). Benjamin points out that: "Historically, the Isthmus of Kra, the Malay Peninsula, Singapore, Riau, Sumatra, and Kalimantan have belonged to one historical reality—the Malay World" (2003: 5 n2). Through a complex maze of sea channels and river capillaries that facilitated exchange and trade throughout the region, *silat* wound its way into the dense rain forest and up into the mountains.

Some of my informants and some academics refer to this region as the *Nusantara*, which narrowly translated refers to the culture of the Indonesian archipelago (Taylor 1994: 83), and surrounding locales, but more broadly it is defined as a geographical region that extends "from the Easter Islands in the east to Madagascar in the west" (Maryono 2002: 2). Benjamin (2003: 7) corrects the extended notion of the Malay world, which he argues is simply a device of contemporary Malay scholarship, and following Milner (1981) declares the term "the Malay World" should be reserved for those regions that were historically ruled by a Malay Sultanate.

However, to Malay ears Benjamin's term for "the Malay world," the *alam Melayu*, "sounds weird" and implies a supernatural realm "like you exist in your own universe" (Julie). Given the strangeness of co-opting the term *alam Melayu* I simply employ "the Malay world" instead, and in much the same sense as Benjamin except that I would include parts of the Sulu Archipelago and Aceh.[41] It may be said that *silat* spills out from the Malay world to be found beyond its borders, but this statement is also problematic because Java is widely regarded as a centre of *silat*, and yet is not part of Benjamin's definition of the Malay world. Where *wayang kulit* (shadow theatre) is found, so too is *silat*; the terrain of shadow theatre is the terrain

[41] I am uneasy with Benjamin's (2003: 5 n2) definition as it excludes parts of the southern Philippines (e.g. Moro) which are also part of the historical reality of the Malay world. Furthermore, only the edges of Kalimantan can be said to be included in "the Malay world."

Map 1.1 Malaysia and the Malay world

of Asian martial arts, including India, North Asia, Southeast Asia and China. The problem of defining the scope of the Malay region is similar to the problem of defining exactly the scope of *silat*, which is one reason why I find the term "war magic" particularly appealing. Some may say that "war magic" is too delimiting a term to refer to martial arts, but I think this is only the case if a narrow definition of magic is employed that regards magic *a priori* as something false and not as potentially real, which is an issue I take up in subsequent chapters.

In more concrete terms *silat* is a form of cultural capital that may be seen employed in a variety of situations and settings including police and military combat training, wedding performance, royal entertainment, club demonstrations, *kuda kepang* (Javanese hobby horse dance), *sepak takraw* (Malay football), *dabus* (ceremonial self-piercing with a *keris*), Balinese dance (*baris gede*), Malay courtly dances, as well as featuring in exorcism, massage, theatre, movies and in sporting events.

Silat exponents proudly regard *silat* as indigenous to Southeast Asia, and not a derivative of an Indian, Chinese, or any other martial art. However, to my knowledge nobody claims that *silat* originally derives from Peninsular Malaysia. Draeger (1972: 23) makes a good case for its origin and development in the Riau Archipelago, romanticized and demonized in former literature as the notoriously dangerous islands that once acted as a trade route and historical thoroughfare from Indonesia to the mainland, its people stereotyped by the glamorous if none too polite name of "sea pirates." Sopher says that "one or two accounts note the timidity of these people and their reluctance to go ashore, but the majority of writers assert that

the sea nomads are or used to be fierce pirates" (Sopher 1977: 88). Sopher continues that piracy was a "special cultural characteristic resulting from close contact and close political affiliation with Malays" who organized the island people (and not specifically the sea nomads) into a "machine for piracy" to extract profit by means of violence from productive coastal communities: they were "in effect the guerrilla mercenaries of a political state" (Sopher 1977: 88–89).[42]

For Draeger (1972), who carried out a survey of *silat* styles in the early 1970s, *silat Melayu* was the ancient form of *silat* from which all modern forms derive. According to Draeger, *silat Melayu* is a crude prototype of *silat* originating in the Riau Archipelago that subsequently became *Silat Minangkabau*, and from Sumatra spread to Java and across Southeast Asia. As Draeger states:

> Actually, there are very few Indonesian forms of *pentjak-silat* untouched by Menangkabau styles. The latter, as progressively developed extensions of the early and crude *silat Melayu*, provide the mechanical bases for *pentjak-silat* throughout the archipelago (Draeger 1972: 133, itals. added).

Many Southeast Asian *silat* performers, especially Javanese and Sumatran immigrants and their descendants, view a performance of Peninsular Malay *silat* stony-faced with no comment, or will politely say "very nice" if asked for their opinion. Privately they regard Peninsular Malay *silat* with scorn, if not outright derision, disparaging what they claim is the inferior, invented, and borrowed quality of Malaysian *silat*. This type of sentiment seems to have caused Malaysian aristocrats such as Pa' Ariffin to become defensive, and they in turn are derisory of Javanese or Sumatran "peasant *silat*" as compared to "royal *silat*." According to Tuan Ismail (1991: 66–67), *silat Melayu* in the form of *silat sekebun* (the style reserved for the Malay *guru silat*) derives from the eleventh century Pagar Ruyong royalty of Sumatra. This is one reason for Malaysian claims that *silat Melayu* originates from "royal *silat*" and is not a development of "peasant *silat*"[43] However, *silat Melayu* itself consists of derivatives of many regional *silat* styles, including *silat Jawa* (Javanese *silat*), *silat Minang*, (Sumatran Minangkabau) and Bugis *silat* (Ku and Wong 1978: 7–12).

Hundreds of different *silat* styles exist across the major islands of the Indonesian archipelago, especially Java, Sumatra, Aceh, Sulawesi, and the Riau Archipelago. Distinct styles of *silat* are also to be found in Brunei, East and West Malaysia, the

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[42] Andaya and Andaya (2001: 26) say the power of Srivijaya derived from its rulers' influence over the Orang Laut, whom they describe as a piratical fierce fighting force. This holds good for the Malay system of governance with the *laksamana* (admiral) in charge of exercising this force. Indeed, the *laksamana* may have been Orang Laut, as was Hang Tuah himself (Andaya and Andaya 2001: 74).

[43] Historically the Malay societies of Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, and the Riau Archipelago were stratified into three classes: the royal family (sultans and rajas), the aristocracy (*bangsawan*), and the peasants (*ra'ayat*) (Andaya and Andaya 2001: 46–51; Farrer 2006a: 26; Gullick 1958: 21–22).

Philippines, Singapore and Southern Thailand.[44] Nowadays, *silat* is found globally, with schools established in many European countries including France, Holland, and Britain, as well as in America and Australia. It is difficult to assess how many *silat* styles are extant. Draeger says that, "*Pentjak-silat* exists in 157 recorded styles" (Draeger 1972: 33), yet Maryono (2002: 2) says that there are over 260 styles or genres of *silat*. Official estimates vary, but Haji Abdullah Shafiie, former President of the Singapore Silat Federation, says they recognize 2,000 styles of *silat* in Indonesia, 300 in Brunei, 300 in Malaysia and 36 in Singapore.[45]

It is difficult to assess how many people practise some form of *silat* in Peninsular Malaysia, let alone in Southeast Asia. In 1963 Silat Gayong became the first officially registered *silat* organization in Malaysia, and Tengku Kassim, the elder brother of the first Prime Minister of the newly post-colonial state (Tengku Abdul Rahman) gave it "whole hearted encouragement and support" (Sheppard 1972: 148).[46] By the 1970s, as Sheppard notes, there was, "a pan-Malaysian Organization with branches in every state in West Malaysia and in 1970 it had a total enrolment of more than 50,000 members" (Sheppard 1972: 148). Silat Seni Gayong Malaysia currently assesses its "membership" to be one-and-a-half million members worldwide, an exaggeration based upon a total of all known memberships, including those which have lapsed. It is clear from these figures that *silat* is a mass phenomenon; what is not clear is how deep this phenomenon penetrates into, or indeed is formative of Malay culture.

Towards an Etymology and Definition of Silat

The word *silat* is said to derive from *silap* (to make a mistake). This means that you use the opponent's strength against them—in their strength lies their weakness. This strength could be physical or psychological. Other etymological roots suggested by informants include *sekilat* meaning "as fast as lightening" derived from *kilat* (lightning); *sila* (as in *silsilah* or chain) indicating the transmission of *silat* from *guru* to *murid* (disciple of *silat* or other religious or secular knowledge); and more mysteriously, from the Arabic *solat* (prayer), although linguists regard *solat* as an unlikely candidate for the etymological root of *silat*.[47] Other contenders for the etymological root of *silat* include the Orang Selat (an indigenous Malay people of Singapore), and *selat* as in Selat Melaka (the Straits of Malacca).

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[44] In Thailand a relative of *silat* appears in the form of the traditional Thai martial art, known as *krabbi krabong*.

[45] Interview with Haji Abdullah Shafiie, President of PERSISI (Persekutuan Silat Singapura—established in 1973) in Singapore, August 2001.

[46] *Tengku* is a royal Malay title.

[47] Geoffrey Benjamin, personal communication 10 October 2002.

According to Rashid (1990: 85–89) rituals of *silat* are used as a switch for the emotions in situations of inter-ethnic violence. There is clear evidence for the involvement of *silat* groups in violence against the Chinese during the post-war interregnum, and during the racial clashes of 1969 (Cheah 2003: 296; Shamsul 1997: 212). Against Rashid's (1990) formula *silat* may be said to act as a medium of peace rather than as a trigger for conflict. For example, Pa' Ariffin's definition of *silat* is not, as one might expect, that *silat* is the art of war, but that *silat* is "the art of stopping war."[48] No doubt this does not eschew the role of violence as "stopping war" may also be achieved by violence, only on a smaller scale (riots, assassination). Nevertheless, a model where a switch of the emotions equals a particular outcome (violence) is problematic when it comes to a rounded conception of *silat*. Rashid's (1990) model is influenced by frustration/aggression theory, and is part of an early endeavour to place emotions more firmly on the social science map. More recent literature contends that there is a complex dialogical relationship between cognition and emotion, which would also apply to *silat*. Moreover, *silat* performers' movements are sometimes so elegant they appear dance-like.

Silat is not simply reducible to the agonistic function of war magic. Malays refer to some types of *silat* as dance, such as *silat pengantin* (wedding *silat*) which according to Sheppard (1972:141) is also known as *silat Medan* (from Medan?) and as *silat pulut* (rice cake *silat*).[49] This provides further evidence for the multiple roles of *silat*, a martial art that is certainly implicated in the Malay technology of violence, but which also functions as a means of celebration through dance (Fig. 1.3).

Malaysian *guru silat* regard *silat* as an indigenous art form. *Ilmu*, defined as mystical knowledge and as science, is an important component of the art. Pa' Ariffin says that *silat* is eighty percent knowledge, and only twenty percent physical. *Silat* is a form of knowledge that is embodied in the practitioner, resulting in a set of martial skills that may occasionally be seen in the public performance of the *guru silat*, but which should also condition their conduct and composure in day to day life.

To prefix *silat* with either *pencak* or *seni* is a political issue given the competitive nationalist implications in the unfolding development of nation states in Southeast Asia and the historical formation of national representative bodies of *silat*. In Peninsular Malaysia the term *seni* operates to distinguish Malay from Indonesian styles of *silat*, where *pencak* refers to the fighting aspects of *silat* or to the combative use of a cutting weapon (Sheppard 1983: 101). Hence, the Malay claim that *seni* is the root of *pencak* and not merely a flowery embellishment, or stylistic addition.

Al-Attas notes that the Holy Quran can be read in its exoteric or esoteric aspects and that "it is the latter, like a Rosetta Stone which when deciphered would reveal inexhaustible treasures that comprises the 'wellspring' from which Sufism develops" (al-Attas 1963: 4). This insight applies to *silat*, where *pencak silat* is the exoteric aspect, and *seni silat* is the esoteric aspect. In other words, *pencak* (fighting) can be regarded as the *zahir* (outer/exoteric knowledge), whilst *seni* pertains to

[48] Pa' Ariffin is making an implicit reference to Sun Tzu's classic text *The Art of War*.

[49] *Pulut* denotes sticky rice, and is often associated with special festival food.

Fig. 1.3 Wedding *silat* danced in Singapore

the whole of *silat* including *batin* (inner/esoteric knowledge) and *zahir. Seni silat* is thus considered to be a deeper level of understanding. Therefore, it is said that each aspect of *silat* emanates from *seni*, including both the fighting and the dance aspects, pencak *silat* and wedding *silat*. No doubt Indonesian practitioners might disagree with this argument. The main point to be borne in mind however is that *seni* for Seni Silat Haqq Melayu refers to the art of *silat*, an art that is comprised of physical (*pencak*) and esoteric (*kebatinan*) elements.

The Emergence of Silat

It is believed that the origin of *silat* in Peninsular Malaysia may be traced back to Hang Tuah in the fifteenth century.[50] The legend of Hang Tuah and his four

[50] It is commonly asserted in the popular literature that martial arts originated more than two thousand years ago in India (Maliszewski 1987: 225; Payne 1981: 5). Chinese kung fu is said to originate with the Indian monk Ta Mo (Bodhidhrama), who arrived at the Shaolin Monastery in the fourth century C.E. However, Hsu (1997: 59–60) dismisses the Shaolin origin of kung fu as a "fairytale" which fails to take into account the historical and archaeological evidence concerning warfare and martial arts in China during the Spring Autumn Period (722–481 BC) and the Warring States Period (475–221 BC). On the other hand, Kerala, in South India, in tourist promo-

companions is an important historical and mythological trope in Malaysian history and politics (Errington 1975).[51] Hang Tuah was imprisoned and unjustly put to death by the Sultan of Melaka (Muzaffar Shah 1446–1458) for crimes of lust never perpetrated, and upon learning of this, his comrade in arms and friend, Hang Jebat, ran *amok* and subsequently locked himself up in the Sultan's palace with several of the Sultan's concubines. Apparently, Hang Jebat killed anyone else who ventured near him, and only one warrior in the land was capable of defeating him, that warrior being the invincible Hang Tuah. As luck would have it, Hang Tuah was not dead, but was languishing in prison, hidden from the Sultan by the machinations of Tun Perak, the *Bendahara* (Chief Minister). During the ensuing battle the barely rehabilitated Hang Tuah is said to kill Hang Jebat (or in other renditions Hang Kesturi), thus placing his fealty to the monarch above his loyalty to his friend. This ratifies a covenant by which the monarch's power is considered absolute; the subject is obliged to unquestioningly obey, given the sole proviso that the Sultan shall not belittle or dishonour the subject. Andaya and Andaya characterize this Hobbesian social contract as one where service is exchanged for just rule (Andaya and Andaya 2001: 35, 49).

In the *Sejarah Melayu* (the Malay Annals) the martial prowess of the Malay rulers and nobility is dramatically recounted in many colourful vignettes, for example, that of Sultan Ala'u'd-din personally apprehending thieves in flight, and chopping one in half "cleaving his waist as though it had been a gourd" (Brown 1970: 106). These legends are important because they establish the principle of the divine rule of kings, kings who are said to be the Shadow of God on earth, and because they firmly tie Divine Right to the war machine (*silat*). Pa' Ariffin's father, sometimes called the *Singha Melayu* (the Malay Lion), was said to be the "reincarnation" of Hang Tuah (Sheppard 1964), and Pa' Ariffin assiduously extols absolute fealty and loyalty to the monarch. Melaka, the home of Hang Tuah, is regarded as the Mecca of the *pesilat*. The legend of Hang Tuah was made into an epic film by P. Ramlee, and it concludes with the following question: "Who was right? Hang Tuah or Hang Jebat?" This was always an interesting question to ask

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tions, proclaims itself "the birthplace of the martial arts."[55] Balakrishnan begins his book with the thundering declaration "*Kalarippayattu* is the only form of the most ancient traditional systems of physical culture, self-defence and martial techniques still in existence" (Balakrishnan 1995: 13, italics added). Indian martial arts go under several different headings, but *kalarippayattu* in Kerala "in its present form dates back to at least the twelfth century C.E." with various types of wrestling and weapons training… "developed primarily to prepare Kerala's martial caste (*Nairs*) for combat, although higher caste Yatra brahmans, lower caste Tiyyas, and many Muslims and Christians were also proficient in the form" (Maliszewski 1987: 225). For *silat* Maliszewski says: "By the 1300s [*silat*] had become a highly sophisticated technical art that was open solely to members of the nobility and the ruling classes. Indian, Chinese, Arabic and, later, Japanese influences permeated in varying degrees a number of styles" (Maliszewski 1987: 226, italics added). Later Maliszewski refines his view, and says that after the fourteenth century "the practice of this combative art was open to other social classes" (1996: 83).

[51] The companions were Hang Jebat, Hang Kesturi, Hang Lekir, and Hang Lekiu.

guru silat, who, with the exception of Pa'Ariffin, almost invariably answered that Hang Jebat was right and that Hang Tuah betrayed him unjustly.

The origin myths of *silat* often involve a whirlpool generated by a waterfall. Some myths say a man invented *silat*, others say a woman. One mythological account of the origin of *silat* relates the story of a woman who had withdrawn from her husband after a violent beating. Later, on the way to (or back from) the waterfall, she witnessed a battle between a crane and a snake. When she got home she thrashed her husband, who subsequently became her first *silat* pupil.[52] The origin myth is often used to account for the exceptionally graceful, feminine look of *silat*. However, following the Sejarah Melayu, Sheppard writes:

> The evolution of the Malay art of self defence is said to have come about as follows: at the end of the thirteenth century when Muslim missionaries had only recently arrived in North Sumatra, three young Sumatran Malays from Minangkabau …. journeyed to Aceh …. to study the new religion. Their names were Burhanuddin, Shamsuddin and Aminuddin. Their teacher's house was near a forest pool; this was fed by a cascade of water, which fell more than sixty feet from a rocky ridge in the hills above. A tall Bongor tree stood close to the edge of the pool …. One day Aminuddin went to bathe and to fetch water for the household. The cascade which struck the centre of the pool set up a constant succession of ripples which spread outward across the surface. This was an everyday occurrence, but Aminuddin noticed a Bongor flower riding on a ripple some distance from the water's edge. The impact from the cascade sucked in anything which floated on the surface towards a central whirlpool, and the flower was drawn gradually away from the bank. But the spray from the waterfall set up a kind of artillery barrage [*sic*] on the fringe of the whirlpool. When the flower reached a certain point in its drift towards the centre the barrage struck the surface in front of it, and as if it were animated, the flower sprang back in the direction of the bank: sometimes to one side, sometimes to another. […] Half an hour later the flower was still in buoyant movement when suddenly, propelled by a combination of spray and breeze, it was carried outside the orbit of the whirlpool and began to float slowly towards the bank …. Aminuddin picked the flower from the water and he thought that he heard a voice from the Bongor tree telling him to apply the lesson of the flower, and to teach it to his friends. On that morning *silat* was born (Sheppard 1972: 140, italics added).

From here the three Malays returned to their village, Olakkan, on the West Coast of Sumatra to teach *silat* and religious knowledge (Sheppard 1972: 141). This myth situates the founding of *silat* as contiguous with the introduction of Islam, and specifies a female founder. *Silat* here is related to the flower dancing in the waterfall, and to the voice of the Bongor tree, which shows that whilst *silat* is a vehicle for the transmission of Islam, it is simultaneously a repository of older "animist" beliefs, which Skeat [1900] (1984) refers to as "Malay magic" or the Malay "folk religion."

In Northern Sumatra Islamic graves from the thirteenth century C.E. have been found that can be used to date the spread of Islam, which became prominent in Peninsular Malaysia by the early fifteenth century during the Melaka Sultanate

[52] For *silat* origin myths see also Draeger (1972: 9–10); Maryono (2002: 34); Pauka (1998: 27–28); Sheppard (1972: 140); and Tuan Ismail Tuan Soh (1991: 36–37).

(Bellwood 1997: 140). However, according to the Seni Silat Haqq Melayu website, *silat* developed many centuries before this:

> *Silat Melayu* is the traditional combative art of the Malay people dating back to at least the sixth century, the system had a formal syllabus by the eleventh century, and is held by many to be the common root from which the many branches of *silat* later developed. The geographical origins of the system are subject to debate, however it reached its historical peak during the fifteenth century under the Sultanate of Melaka, and the exploits of Hang Tuah the *silat Melayu* exponent extraordinaire are still recounted today as an integral part of the cultural legacy of *silat*.[53]

According to Pa' Ariffin *silat Melayu* has been "the same" for many centuries.[54] It is interesting to compare this account to Draeger, who, after emphasizing the important geographical location of Riau, which due to "multidirectional migratory flows" acted as a melting pot of combative ideas and weaponry, says:

> Many Indonesian combat authorities feel that Indonesian-style combatives began on Riouw. These combatives later served as the basis of what came to be called *pentjak-silat*. The old Riouw combatives are today termed *silat Melayu*, and it is known that they were in use as early as the sixth century A.D. They were crude forms; their germ ideas, however, were carried to the Menangkabau kingdom at Priangan, its ancient capital, and also to the Srividjaya empire centered at Palembang. In the former area, *silat* Melayu underwent great diversification and formed what is today traditionally recognized as the source of Indonesian *pentjak-silat* (Draeger 1972: 23, italics added).

Although one account emphasizes change more than stasis, it is agreed that Malaysian and Indonesian *silat* initially developed independently of Indian forms sometime in the sixth century C.E. to absorb Hindu and Islamic elements only later.

We see that for Seni Silat Haqq Melayu *silat* only reaches its "historical peak" of development in the golden age of Melaka. Hence the tradition of *silat Melayu* upheld by Pa' Ariffin is deemed to be that emerging from the royal Melaka court in the hundred or so years before the Portuguese conquest in 1511. "Tradition" also stretches back to the customs, beliefs, and practices of the eleventh century royal immigrants who fled from Sumatra to Singapore, who then subsequently fled to found their royal dynasty in Melaka. After the fall of Melaka this royal tradition is split and conferred through the favoured son to Johor, where it is ultimately lost to the Bugis; and through another son to Perak, a remote backwater at the time, that has nonetheless the modern distinction of having the sole surviving heirs to the Melaka throne (Andaya and Andaya 2001: 62, 77). Therefore, the Perak nobility, including Pa' Ariffin, and the Perak Royal Family, envisage themselves as the living bearers of the original Malay royal tradition, *silat* included.

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[53] Source <http://www.silat.f9.co.uk/mainmenu3.htm>.

[54] Unlike many of my informants I resist essentialising *silat*. Instead of constructing an ideal type of *silat* to stand in all places, and for all time as the unique and absolute, "real," "original," "royal," "traditional," or "authentic" *silat*, I regard *silat* as a social project under continuous re-construction.

The Haqqani Sufi Tarekat and Seni Silat Haqq Melayu

Seni Silat Haqq Melayu is connected to the Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufi Order, led in Southeast Asia by the Malaysian Prince H.R.H Shaykh Raja Ashman, the Caliph of Shaykh Nazim. To comprehend Seni Silat Haqq Melayu my work necessarily engages aspects of transnational Sufism (see Chapter 6). I seek to understand *silat* as the embodied practice of Malay notions intertwined with Haqqani Sufism in the process of spreading transnationally. It is not my intention to generalize about "The Malays" or *Melayu* whether as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1991) or a as a "hierarchy of being" (Wee 1985).[55]

In the United Kingdom and in the United States the Haqqani Sufi *tarekat* recruit followers through martial arts organizations that operate from within Universities. These organizations claim to offer the royal, secret, and authentic martial art of the Malay aristocracy. Because people who train Haqqani "Sufi martial arts" (*silat*) do not necessarily have to convert to Islam, this openness facilitates the penetration of the Haqqani Sufi *tarekat* into networks of potentially sympathetic contacts. Whilst they take their arduous ascetic religious practices very seriously, mischievous playfulness runs through their quotidian interactions. The Haqqani organization is elite, royal, serious, and secretive, yet also porous and playful, and these combined features add to its mysterious intrigue and appeal.

There is another *silat* club called "Seni Silat Haqq" based at the University of Michigan who are also affiliated with the Haqqani Sufi *tarekat* of Shaykh Raja Ashman and Shaykh Nazim. Outside of two brief contacts with a student via email, data from their website, and the withering comments of Pa' Ariffin, I have acquired little information concerning this group. Apparently, after only six months of training, their *guru silat* Shaykh Bapak Waleed (Leonardo), from Panama in South America, split off from Pa' Ariffin, who taught him *silat* in Los Angeles during the late 1980s. Pa' Ariffin previously called his style "Seni Silat Haqq" and only added the *Melayu* suffix after 1999. When I asked Pa' Ariffin why he changed the style's name, he said his style "changes its name every seven years." Maybe he said this to save losing face by admitting that he wanted to differentiate his style from the style of his ex-student, who has developed a notable website.[56]

Seni Silat Haqq Melayu must also be differentiated from "Seni Silat Al-Haq," a style of *silat* originating from Singapore; the latter is one of eighteen styles

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[55] Anthropological or sociological accounts of Sufism have focused primarily upon the Sufi organization and the charisma of the saints (Evans-Pritchard 1949; Gellner 1969; Gilsenan 1973; Lindholm 1990). There are few works specifically concerning the Naqshbandi Sufi *tarekat* in Southeast Asia (al-Attas 1963; van Bruinessen 1998, 1992). Recent scholarship has turned towards the study of transnational Sufism (Nielson 1998; Werbner 2003; Werbner and Basu 1998; Zhelyazkova and Nielson 2001).

[56] See http://www.umich.edu/%7Esilat/pencaksilatpentjaksilatsenihaqqminangkabausatriamudain-structorpr ofile.html>.

composed by the late Pa' Hosni, who travelled extensively in the region to study under hundreds of Sufi and *silat* masters.[57] In Malaysia, Seni Silat Al-Haq is the style of *silat* taught (privately) by Pa' Ariffin's brother, Pa' Din (who learned it from Pa' Hosni in Singapore), and Pa' Din was very upset that Pa' Ariffin also named his style after *haqq* (truth). Sibling rivalry is a regular feature reported in Malay ethnography, and this may sometimes underlie the fusion of different styles of *silat*, as well as drive the fission, alterity, or splitting of *silat* (see Chapters 4 and 5).

The Haqqani Sufi *tariqa* (*tarekat* in Malay) of Shaykh Nazim al-Qubrusi al-Haqqani consider themselves to be the Royal *tariqa*, a virtuoso and elite religious organization stemming from the Ottoman Empire. The *Naqshbandiyyah* have longstanding historical connections with Southeast Asian monarchs. Riddell (2001: 103), in his case study of Aceh, where written records go back to the sixteenth century, shows that Shams al-Din (c. 1575–1630) initiated Sultan Iskandar Muda into the *Naqshbandiyyah* order serving "as Shaykh al-Islam, the supreme spiritual guide" to the Sultanate (Riddell 2001: 110).[58] In present day Brunei, Shaykh Nazim "is considered saint of the age…welcomed by the generosity of its people and especially by the Sultan, Hajji Hasan al-Bolkiah" (Kabbani 1995: 396). The "people" and the Sultan are mentioned together in one breath: the solidarity of the "common people," together with the Sultan, is something that the Haqqani like to emphasize. For the Haqqani, the body politic is composed of the people as the body with the Sultan as the head: both require the other in order to survive and prosper; both have different functions and needs; both acquire their position by *fiat*.

Though the Haqqanis adopt so-called "folk" religious practices such as the use of talismans, due to their royal orientation they would shun the idiom of "folk Islam." Shaykh Nazim's group seems to collapse the distinction between "high" and "popular" (folk) Sufism established by Nicholson [1914] (1963: 131, 139), as their mission is to diffuse "high" Sufism among the masses. The Shaykhs establish and maintain extensive transnational links through their first-class-jet-set lifestyles, supplemented with the use of substantial websites, a host of publications and email. Centres have been established in North America, Britain, most of Western Europe, the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia (Nielson 1998: n.p.). I would agree with Neilson who says that it is difficult to establish the number of members worldwide "as the very concept of membership is nebulous, and declaration of adherence (*bay'a*) at a meeting led by Shaykh Nazim is easy, as distinct from most other Sufi groups which require an often lengthy initiation process" (Nielson 1998: n.p.).

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[57] Interview with Cikgu Jamal of Silat Serentau, Singapore (Pa' Hosni's former student).

[58] According to Andaya and Andaya (2001: 55) no necessary connection may be made between Aceh and the historic Melaka Sultanate: evidence of the Sufi connection to the Melaka Sultanate is still unclear. My point is that the *Naqshbandiyyah* have had connections with Southeast Asian royalty for centuries.

Led by the charismatic Shaykh Nazim, otherwise known as *Maulana* (Master), and his sons-in-law, Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani and his brother Shaykh Muhammad Adnan Kabbani, through tours, books, websites, and performances of secular and divine power, the Haqqani actively proselytize in the west. Together they brave the dangerous "land of infidels, *kufristan*, of idolaters, hypocrites, backsliders—the 'unbelievers'" in order to bring them to salvation (Werbner 2003: 43).

Their strategy is clearly effective: in Shaykh Nazim's first visit to America in 1991 he visited fifteen states and established thirteen centres for the Haqqani order, and by his second visit in 1993 Kabbani could boast that "through him over 10, 000 people in North America have entered Islam and have taken initiation in the Naqshbandi Order" (Kabbani 1995: 396). Shaykh Nazim, who comes from Cyprus, has been visiting Malaysia since 1985. Since that time thousands of people have taken *bay'ah* (initiation, pledge, spiritual connection).[59] I have not been able to gain figures as to the exact number of followers (however defined) that Shaykh Raja Ashman has in Malaysia. In 2003 a rough estimate for Kuala Lumpur from my headcounts of people regularly attending the *zawiya* would put the number as somewhere in the region of four hundred to five hundred individuals. My visit in 2008 would double this number, where the *zawiya* now occupies the original house plus the one next door to it.

New Age?

Nielson points out that: "Of several groups now in Britain, the largest are in London, Birmingham and Sheffield. Nielson continues that "during 1999 a new centre was established in Glastonbury which has especially attracted white converts" (Nielson 1998: n.p.). This is significant because Glastonbury is the centre of New Age religiosity in the U.K. (Prince and Riches 2000).

Heelas (1996: 55) discusses self spirituality as a significant component of eastern world rejecting-activity (Taoism, Buddhism, and Sufism); activity that is oriented towards transcending the ego (a familiar trope of the Naqshbandis). He stipulates that "although it would be inappropriate to think of such eastern teachings as being 'New Age' in their traditional settings, they surely can be treated as such in the west" (Heelas 1996: 55). In my view this conclusion is problematic, and the problems occur because of the way it is formulated. Heelas unnecessarily delimits the New Age concept to the "west" and (I suppose) to "modern" rather than "traditional" settings. The concepts "traditional" and "modern" are

[59] Nazim, the Haqqani Foundation secretary pointed out that the Haqqani Foundation is run by five millionaires, and provides the economic muscle behind the Naqshbandi Sufi Order of Shaykh Nazim.

problematic given that the notion of tradition itself is a product of modernity (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

Transnationalism, defined as "the organisational crossing of national boundaries" is helpful to think beyond simple dualisms such as east/west, traditional/modern, us/them, in a world whose interconnectedness, globalization, and cosmopolitanism seems ever more readily apparent (Werbner 2003: 1 n1).[60] Furthermore, Seni Silat Haqq Melayu and the Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufi *tarekat* are better characterized by the term "field" than "setting" since they comprise complex international networks. Hence, I would say that it may well be appropriate to see eastern teachings as being "New Age" in the west and in their traditional "settings."

Despite their arduous religious observances and claims to tradition it is surely relevant to consider Seni Silat Haqq Melayu and the Haqqani Sufi *tarekat*, whether in Malaysia or England, as a New Age movement, as a "pop-religion" (Turner 2004). Correspondingly, Seni Silat Haqq Melayu, for all its claims to "noble traditional lineage," can also be seen as a form of New Age pop *silat*. However, the higher echelons of the Haqqani Sufi *tarekat* and of Seni Silat Haqq Melayu certainly do not endorse a perception of the organization as a New Age pop religion, and would shudder at the prospect.

Nevertheless, the Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufi *tarekat* are approached by many of the British (though not necessarily Caucasian) adherents as a type of New Age religion, which causes all sorts of upsets. For example, Pa' Ariffin, whilst a Haqqani *Imam* (roughly a priest) in London, would bitterly complain that the female converts left their used tampons stuffed behind the radiators of Peckham Mosque, something unimaginable in Malaysia where menstruating women would not enter the mosque as a matter of course. Pa' Ariffin narrates that he always had a problem in the United Kingdom with mothers: "This is not your mosque, this is Allah's mosque," they would say to him, to which he would reply, "Do you see Allah here or me here? If your kid misbehaves someone must tell them off." More positively, consider Cecily, a petite Goth enchantress with long blue hair, who, scantily clad in black leather loved to dance in the firelight to feral music, in the midst of beer swilling drugged people at Glastonbury festival, casting her spell with a *pedang* (sword) in the "traditional" style of the Malay aristocracy.[61] In bringing Islam to the west the Haqqani certainly have their work cut out for them. But this is to run ahead with the story, and for now I will turn to a brief outline of the forthcoming chapters.

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[60] Werbner (2003: 1 n1) usefully distinguishes between transnationalism, globalization (the global diffusion of ideas, images and consumer goods), and internationalism (which denotes relations between states in the international arena).

[61] As Sarah Pike points out: "Native American jewellery and buckskins, pentagrams and crystals, anything in black or purple, flowery gauze skirts and "ethnic" clothes, leather bodices, boots or other medieval wear .… are part of a distinctively Pagan style" (Pike 1996: 132).

The Chapters

Chapter 2 addresses the anthropological literature relevant to my premise that the *guru silat* should be rethought as a war magician because of their work in the unseen realm (*alam ghaib*). Earlier I proposed that a misconceptualisation of *silat* occurred primarily because the analytical framework imposed by colonial ethnographers was faulty. This faulty analysis has been recapitulated into the present era. The central tenet I have in mind here is the colonial theory of magic as something existing outside of or beyond the body. In other words, Victorian scholars promoted, albeit unwittingly, a disembodied theory of magic. For differing reasons the error is compounded by some of the founding figures in anthropology, including Malinowski and Mauss. Alongside the faulty classification of magic, mysticism, the occult, spirituality, sorcery, and the "supernatural" are wrongly seceded from healing, performance, ritual and theatre.

Silat encapsulates an embodied form of Malay mysticism and magic. War magic is something embodied and actual, as opposed to something fake or solely virtual, and this leads me to challenge Gell's (1998, 1999) cognitive take on the magical power of art with a view grounded in perspectives of embodied performance and skill (Csordas 2002; Ingold 2000: 5). Changing the anthropological focus was facilitated by taking an embodied approach to war magic, a view that was informed by my performance ethnography of *silat*. Breaking away from the avoidance of war magic facilitates an anthropological rethinking of magic, witchcraft, and sorcery, and has implications for the anthropology of art, embodiment, experience, healing and performance in Malaysia and beyond.

Chapter 3 discusses the practice and performance of *silat* from a technical martial arts point of view, and outlines the background and history of various styles of *silat*. Seni Silat Haqq Melayu, like most if not all Malay styles of *silat*, is a composite style that derives from several others. Malay *guru silat* acknowledge the amalgamation of the styles, and regard themselves to be gardeners in the garden of *silat*. Beginning with bodily "hexis" I examine what it is about *silat* that makes it so physically enchanting, and enquire how this magic in motion is achieved (Bourdieu 2002: 209). I modify Gell's [1992] (1999) notion of the "technology of enchantment" to become the "performance of enchantment," by which I mean that the technical basis of the martial techniques are honed to such a degree through practice, rehearsal, and performance that their execution takes on a magical appearance, and creates an uncanny effect for the opponent. For example, a *silat* practitioner may develop the ability—through footwork and misdirection—to vanish from in front of his or her opponent, only to instantly reappear behind them. The real magic of *silat*, where practitioners gain incredible endurance, power, speed, and strength is the result of arduous endeavour in a complex martial art that exists in a symbiotic relationship with everyday life.

Chapter 4 focuses upon the mystical, spiritual, and religious dimensions of Seni Silat Haqq Melayu. Again, stretching Gell from the cognitive domain into the domain of embodied performance, I refer to the methods and procedures used to

draw power from the unseen or sacred realm as the "enchantment of performance." The neglect, omission, or bracketing off of *silat* has created artificial bounds upon Malaysianist anthropological research, not least because *silat* invites an exploration of an alternative cosmology, that of the shadow soul (*bayang*), which has remained mysterious for over a century. I navigate an understanding of "the unseen world" from the perspective of the Haqqani Sufi *tarekat* as well as from the standpoint of *silat*. In *Bahasa Melayu* mystical powers of the animist variety are known as *kebatinan*, which derives from the Arabic word *batin* (inner feelings). In Sufi mystical doctrine similar mystical powers are formulated as part of the doctrine *tasawwuf* (mystical science). Animism and Sufism are usually separated analytically, but this type of surgery leads to complications and distortions that may be avoided if the two are conceptualized together, like separate threads within the same weave, rather than as two unrelated bits of string. For example, meeting Shaykh Nazim for the first time may be considered an intense mystical experience, and the charisma of the Shaykh may transform the entire *Weltanschauung* and ethos of the *silat* performer. This experience feeds into "traditional" Malay embodied ritual practices derived from *silat*, concerning how to draw power from the unseen world.

Chapters 5 and 6 thicken the description and tackle the theme of doubles in relation to the construction of *silat*, and the relations of the *guru silat* to each other and their students. Chapter 5 provides a case study and genealogy of Pa' Ariffin. I trace the career of the *guru silat* from the cradle, through childhood, sibling rivalry and initiation, and depict Pa' Ariffin in relation to his liege Shaykh Raja Ashman, and his saint, Shaykh Nazim. Pa' Ariffin's permission (*ijazah*) to create *silat* derives from his "trusteeship" of mystical gifts (*amanah*) derived from his father, his liege, his saint and from other *guru silat*. Status, power, control, and authority are refracted through issues of creativity and authenticity, and are examined here through the notions of permission (*ijazah*) and spontaneous bodily movement (*gerak*). *Ijazah* is "the permission" to transmit *silat* styles or techniques through or across the generations. *Gerak* is a kind of mystical doubling whereby the *guru silat* appropriates martial techniques and in the process creates *silat*. Movements, sets of movements, and ultimately whole styles of *silat* may be doubled through *gerak*, and if passed down through the generations become invented traditions, themselves subject to the mimesis and alterity of *gerak*, which ultimately re-invokes the issue of *ijazah* (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Taussig 1993). I conclude Chapter 5 by outlining how Pa' Ariffin attempted to bring Seni Silat Gayong Malaysia closer to the auspices of the Sultan of Perak through a ceremony that rehearsed the steps necessary to activate the Malay shadow state that remains within the wings of democracy.

Chapter 6 further examines the career of *guru silat* Pa' Ariffin only now in relation to the theory of social and aesthetic drama known as the "infinity loop model" (Schechner 1994: 630 Fig. 5; Turner 1985: 300). In the infinity loop model social drama feeds into aesthetic drama and vice versa, and this provides a powerful tool with which to organize and understand a bizarre array of encounters that arose during the course of the fieldwork. I trace not only how a group of *silat* practitioners ventured from London to Kuala Lumpur, but conversely how a group of Malaysian *silat* practitioners ventured from Malaysia to London. I emphasise that the theatre

is not peripheral to Seni Silat Haqq Melayu, but provides its very *raison d'être*. In my view, Seni Silat Haqq Melayu is best understood as the conception of an actor, choreographer and director. Indeed for Pa' Ariffin *silat* is a form of theatre. I outline a variety of social dramas where Haqqani practices have fused with Sufism to give a unique brand of *silat* training where the practitioners undergo forty day retreats in Malaysia involving "ego" mortification, conversion to Islam, and even marriage by accident. These social dramas are not all reflected in Pa' Ariffin's London play *Silat: Dance of the Warriors* (staged in 2002), but only the agonistic elements found their reflection alongside a staged reconciliation. Far from any rifts being healed, the show deepened the divide between Pa' Ariffin and nearly all of his former students. In my view the resolution of conflict played by the benevolent Sultan is the wish fulfilment of an end to the violence of continually ruptured relationships.

Chapter 7 explores the rituals of divination and revelation in the main style of Malaysian *silat* which is called *silat gayong* (a precursor of Seni Silat Haqq Melayu). Based upon my own experience, I describe and explain the significance of the lime bath (*mandi limau*), the flower bath (*mandi bunga*), and the oil bath (*mandi minyak*). The oil bath is a test the *pesilat* undergoes to prove their faith in Allah by dipping their hands into a cauldron of boiling oil. I was astonished by the sheer flexibility of the *mandi minyak*: historically it was a trial by ordeal, later an invincibility ritual, and more recently it was considered as a medicinal practice. After considering several contemporary theoretical explanations for this type of "supernatural" phenomenon, I introduce the concept of "occulturation," shorthand for the attribution of occult power to esoteric skills. Applying the ideas of Turner (1961, 1975) concerning "divination" and "revelation," I consider the lime bath as a rite of divination, and the oil bath as a rite of revelation. In the lime bath the *guru silat* summon the shadow of a long dead ancestor to reveal the neophyte's personality type. The oil bath reveals the power of Allah to suspend natural law in order to answer the prayers of the supplicants in an embodied ritual proof that goes beyond language, and beyond what people would normally consider possible. These *silat gayong* rituals indicate that it is important to develop an understanding of the Malay war magician's understanding of death, or *deathscape*.

Chapter 8 closes the section on shadows. Here I regard *silat* through its notion of the shadow soul and its conception of death, and relate this to symbols, artefacts, and performances of eternal transformative regeneration. When death is regarded as a stage between this life and eternity, then it is unsurprising that the spirits of the "the potent dead" dead are believed to watch over the living (Chambert-Loir and Reid 2002). Death in *silat* is not regarded as an end but rather a means to attain access to the netherworld. Therefore *silat* masters may draw the chthonian power of the ancestor's spirits into this realm through necromantic summoning. This takes an embodied form in the *belebat* set of Seni Silat Haqq Melayu. My argument is that necromantic sorcery is embodied in the martial dance, initiation rituals and rites of *silat*. *Silat* functions to physically and spiritually transform the *silat* practitioner and relinquish their fear of death and dying. However, there is a discrepancy between the virtuality and actuality of death, a divergence I formulate as a disjuncture of deathscapes.

In sum Chapter 1 outlines my hypothesis that the Malay martial art must be reconfigured as part of an analytical complex including the Sufi, shaman and magician. I have argued that the omission of the martial artist from this complex is an error of colonial analysis. This error results from a style of thinking that posits a disembodied theory of magic (see Chapter 2), a style of thinking that is basically essentialist. Against this I locate a concrete example of *silat* in Seni Silat Haqq Melayu, and regard it in its complex multiplicity, accepting that contradiction, paradox, and ambiguity are part of the object of enquiry, instead of ignoring untidy elements that would not fit a preconceived theory (McHugh 2004). In order to begin to analytically reconfigure the *guru silat*'s position I have outlined the methods of performance ethnography that have permitted me to move beyond the veils of secrecy concerning *silat*, and sketched out a definition of *silat*, alongside the field and emergence of *silat*. In conclusion I have proposed that *silat*, like Sufism in the hands of the Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufi *tarekat*, may become New Age.