



Nebraska Hapkido Association Newsletter February 2004

Well, we are now solidly into the new year, and people are coming back to class and getting in some solid practice. At the end of March, yellow belts and up will be testing, and in April the white belts who wish to continue will get ready for their 9th gup test.

The picture to the right is actually missing several people, but as you see, we have quite a range of ranks represented in class at the moment.



Ah, the rainbow effect....

Practice does not make perfect.
Perfect practice makes perfect.



As you can tell, we have been practicing our breakfalls and rolls lately...



Formal Dueling Art/Personal Shield Art/Legacy Art...

The Indonesians create an interesting distinction between types of martial arts—in particular, between formal dueling arts, legacy arts, and personal shield arts. They have a number of different terms for martial arts, not only merely for name's sake, but for meaning and usage as well.

Formal dueling arts, termed *kendang* arts, are for official duels against highly trained and skillful martial artists of unknown background. The fighting done on the *kendang* ground is very dangerous, the contests often to the death or major injury. These duels were generally between various champions of rival villages, or masters of various schools and styles.

Personal shield arts, called *beladiri* arts, are assembled arts that are unique to their practitioners. It's the person's own fighting style and means of practicing skills. A person's individual art may have come from one source, or several. A *beladiri* art contains the techniques that an individual would use to defend himself.

And one last type which is germane to this discussion is a *tulen pusaka*—a holy legacy art that is passed down unchanged and whole through generations of practitioners.

Why are these distinctions important? For a number of reasons, really. In Hapkido, we purport to teach self-defense—and yet one of the papers I require of my students for their 2nd gup test has as its topic the question “For a class to teach effective self-defense, what do it need to cover/practice? In what ways does our Hapkido class not do this? How can our Hapkido class more effectively teach self-defense while remaining true to its own necessities?” (For notes on this, read Michelle's paper on "Hapkido and Self-Defense" in the Downloads section of the website.)

It turns out that Hapkido doesn't do a number of exceedingly important things in terms of teaching self-defense—yet I still say we are a self-defense class. Am I lying?

I'd like to think that I'm not.

We can consider Hapkido to be something along the lines of a *tulen pusaka*—an art, a style that is passed down unchanged from one generation to the next. It contains all of the concepts, techniques, and movement styles to complete itself, and it is fairly comprehensive.

So comprehensive, in fact, that there are a number of techniques in it that simply aren't useful for small people. And some that aren't useful for large people. And many that are too intricate for effective self-defense practice. And others that cause too much direct and immediate damage for most self-defense situations.

And yet, I call Hapkido a self-defense art. Why?

As a *tulen pusaka*, Hapkido is an art form that should be passed down unchanged (mostly) from one generation to another. It contains techniques for people of all sizes and shapes, from intricate, beautiful off-balancing techniques to direct, simple attacks.

From this legacy art, people learn the principles of movement, and a general art form which they can then take and adapt to their particular ideas of self-defense. Each person can find techniques fitted to their size, shape, and strength level that can be used according to the principles of the art along with the personal self-defense ethics and philosophy of the individual. Each person forms their *beladiri* from their life experiences, and Hapkido gives each practitioner a large range of ideas and possibilities from which to create it.

I'm not going to discuss the concept of Hapkido as *kendang* art for now---mostly because in this day and age formal duels are not only rare here in the Midwest, but illegal. With respect to the concept of a *tulen pusaka*, though, it feels to me that Hapkido is an encompassing art that can be taken and formed into a *beladiri* art by a vast range of people.

As such, I will still call it a self-defense art. Is that all it is? Certainly not. But as a legacy art, it can be the basis for an effective personal shield art for many different people.

Thanks to Chas Clements of Denver (a Silat practitioner) for the descriptions and explanations for various Indonesian martial arts terms.



"This is the law: The purpose of fighting is to win. There is no possible victory in defense. The sword is more important than the shield and skill is more important than either. The final weapon is the brain. All else is supplemental."

-- John Steinbeck

There is no winning in a self-defense situation. You can never do better than break even--you went into the situation healthy, and the best you can do is leave the situation healthy. The goal isn't to win. The goal is to NOT LOSE.

A self-defense situation is not a war, nor is it a fight, per se. Steinbeck's quote above is still true, **except** for the fact that while there is no possible victory in defense, there is not one in *offense*, either. The purpose of self-defense is to remain unharmed, and at best, you only break even. And not only is the brain the final weapon, it is the most important one also.

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