

The Thread Begins - The Twelfth Principle  
By Pendekar Sanders

*"If you bring forth that which is within you, then that which is within you will be your salvation. If you do not bring forth that which is within you, then that which is within you will destroy you."* - Gnostic Gospels

This thread, once understood appears in the smallest of movements. It is the grand joining of all of the animal mannerisms, techniques, elements and dualities. The Naga roughly names it but it can't really describe it, as no words can.

You can see it, feel it and use it. I call it "the twelfth principle", and it is the chord between spirit and form. If you never find "it" then you are lost until you do, but some people will never find it. If you realized it at least once then it can always be sought again with knowledge.

The physical techniques, which are its doorway, are spectacularly combatively effective. A person who trains and enhances the physical techniques to a razor's edge can turn crudely brutal unless they balance the physical with the "it". The forefathers guarded the deadly Silat with Pencak not just from the eyes of invaders, who would only mistake it for a dance, but from the very same invaders, who discarded it for only the semblance of kicking and punching and lost forever its true key. Pencak is the key that helps unlock the door while allowing a practitioner to remain both compassionate to the world and to its creatures as well as having passion to continually search for the thread. All the while this thread is being woven in the body. The thread is fragile in one piece but it intertwines its magick by pulling together all that is needed to produce, in addition to much else, combat effectiveness far above what is capable without it.

## The Key to the Thread

*“Whatever increases, decreases, limits or extends the body’s power of action, increases decreases, limits, or extends the mind’s power of action. And whatever increases, decreases, limits, or extends the mind’s power of action, also increases, decreases, limits, or extends the body’s power of action.” Spinoza (1632-1677)*

The movement is the vehicle that carries the blows to their target as a wave carries a surfboard. Without the wave the board is a lifeless piece of material. The movement we want constantly flows, twists and torque the body in ways that allow it in any instant to unwind and deliver blows with virtually any part of the anatomy in striking range. From the movements come a formula that produces a third condition, a life, and the sought for thread, the one and only key.

The body becomes a fortress, a porcupine with spines all around it that impales any attack from any angle. A porcupine has its belly unprotected, but as it learns to coil up in a ball we must also leave nothing indefensible. This movement produces an elegance which one should pursue and from it our artistry emerges. A balance between form and function comes to life. Keep in mind if you lose the connection between action and result, practice and principles, the art, the very thread itself can break down. Cross training fragments this, as Bohm’s Fragmentation Theory precisely describes. David Bohm, a great physicist and philosopher writes, “We in the West are notoriously prone to fragmentation”. He cites an example of having an identical wristwatch in each hand, one is smashed to pieces and the other is disassembled. While both contain all of the pieces of the other watch, only one is capable of being put together in a concise whole. How many martial artists try and build a system around the smashed pieces? Pieces which can never interact cohesively with any of the other smashed pieces nor in their own right ever yield a functional complete art.

You often hear that all arts use the same kicks and punches and thus they are all equal. It is the man that makes the art and so on. Yet as I watched during my early

years school after school came to spar and were defeated, no, literally confounded. I kept asking myself WHY? It is true we all were using the same arms and legs and type of blows, more or less. I realize now it is this "TYPE" of movement that is the difference and ultimately what it manifests. All arts are not equal.

Make no mistake the world does not make mastery easy to obtain nor at times easy to see. The student will constantly be bombarded by temptation to become fractured, watered down and influenced to look elsewhere. As much as possible the Master must advise his student to contain his purity in movement and art until its essence is understood (it took me 30 years) in part by the student. Then, once tested the vast majority of external temptations to learn some "trick" will dissolve as the student looks more and more within to find clarity. In becoming intense, the thread comes forth most often and most strongly when the student is guided to practice on the threshold of trances and on the threshold of animal possession. As the conscious chatter dims, the thread will animate you. If your mind is cluttered with targets, ideas and techniques then your attention gets stolen by the black magician that is your ego. After immersing yourself in this art you will then always have no preference in any fight as to which technique will come forth since it is your body that decides.

*"The great way is not difficult for he who has no preferences; but make the slightest distinction (in combat) and heaven and hell are set infinitely apart" - Hsin Hsin Ning, the third century.*

In this trance the human form and the animal essence meld to produce a new form that moves differently than either by itself. This distinct new creation has biomechanical, dynamic and physical properties and a radical psychological shift as both form and energy connect. An almost magical form emerges, at first trained by the violence of practiced combative technique, then perfected in a ritualization of this violence, masked by a deadly but beautiful thing called Pencak.

Please understand, you cannot have style without technique, but you can easily have technique that has no style. In the practice of Pencak Silat the highest attribute of style in practice is the effect both on the body and the mind of the practitioner. Unfortunately all too many teachers who should know better based on their supposed ranks are failing their students because of ego. Classical Pencak Silat is NOT working out in sweat pants and dyed t-shirts, while listening to Heavy Metal, all the while just beating the hell out of each other. It must first be correct on the inside, which if it is will reflect itself on the outside. Those with no inner development will always fail to see this and what they have become - clowns.

### Body Movements

*"Our feelings and our bodies are like water. We learn to swim within the energies of the (body) senses."* - Tarthang Tulku

Let your movement come from nature as did the old Kejawen ways. Beauty comes from nature without warning and is effortless. Man-made attempts will always appear to be labored in comparison. Bring up the water that flows through your body as blood and lymph. Allow it to circulate and as the great Cimande River generated abundance and wealth at its banks, so too will you prosper. Let the emotions flood outward since the river must flood at times to increase good things. Be like water and take no visible shape which would open you to attack, you are here and you are there. Allow the opponents to empty themselves as they attack and then respond with fullness and power from your entire being. Become cloaked in the mystery that is the thread and weave it around you constantly with your movements. From the calm before the storm become terrifying to all by switching to sudden and unpredictable movements of power and grace. Eventually you will be as the cyclone, an enormous whirling power that cannot be foreseen. Everything appears chaotic to those who would analyze you and create sudden changes in direction and unexplainable patterns of barometric change. There is no defense and it only brings terror and tears down everything in its path. Every single strike feels

as though you feel its force wave through your body and any strike that feels as an island in the striking part only, is dead and incorrect.

Imagine a whip that is held immobile up until one inch from its tip, how strong is it, now two inches, then three etc. To the degree it is allowed to flex, its power multiplies drastically. Your body is simply a whip. How much of it are you holding back with each strike? Kicks are trickier. The whip is reversed and you must feel the energy in the middle of the back. As the force rises up from the ground correct stomping travels from the head downward and with correct flexing the energies meet in the middle body, the small of your back. Here, arching the back as the energy of Father Sky and Mother Earth blend, the unification of forces is directed down the limb to its target. Once each isolated part is educated to the feel of power the unification of the whole must begin. Allow the head, then the arm, then the knee, then a kick to wave and whip in and out, swirling the energy and let it out. This then is the feeling of the Naga in a glimpse.

The danger here is to become mesmerized with only the upper body allowing the lower body to become as stone or as a second thought. Strive to work as a unit and if need be work twice as hard on the lower body, as the upper body is more natural to most people. Practice in ordinary circumstances as the idea should be ordinary. As you reach to pickup an object feel the energy flow through you toward the object. Be graceful yet powerful in all movements, even if it is mundane. Eventually throwing a blow will not feel any different than tossing something in the trash, a little less energy but the same feeling. You will have made a suitable home for the thread and it will occupy all of your space and all of your time. You will then have arrived at the place you are to start to say you do this art. Recognize however this thread in ALL things of perfection. Feel it coursing in your body as you hear any stirring piece of music, see any perfect artwork and marvel at a single drop of rain. It is the deep feeling for someone you truly love. It bursts forth uncontrollable with passion and power. Indeed it is as if you must stalk this thing, its always just ahead of you and in you but unseen.

An appropriate quote is from The Tracker by Tom Brown as told to William Jon Watkins:

*"The first track is the end of a string. At the far end, a being is moving; a mystery, dropping a hint about itself every so many feet, telling you more about itself until you can almost see it, even before you come to it."*

Duplicate this energy in your life and your art and one will become the other.

### A Word of Warning

That which we have only touched on can have a heavy impact on your being when first contemplated. In this world we slowly develop our comfortable shells that we hide in. Often when something challenges this "core of information" no matter how true it is or how noble the purpose the "difference" causes us to rebel, become afraid and constrict inwardly. This is usually taken as a bad feeling and one runs from what is really true and correct. The demons that exist relish holding one in oblivion and despair. That which challenges them is met with fierce opposition. Only a few people are clever enough, without help to see this. The rest are happy to return to their lot in life or to their ruts. This art is about going further, opening the inner doors of feeling love, beauty and power. Many people talk about these things but when confronted by their raw essence they wilt quickly. Do not become like this! Dare to go further and except more out of yourself, your life and your art (eventually one and the same).

### The Blueprint of Destruction

There are two ranges to consider in combat - The apparent distance or the distance that you can strike your opponent without really moving forward very much and the elastic distance or the range in which a trained Pencak Silat player can reach the opponent with one large correct sempok or depok step forward.

This later step I refer to as the "edge of combat." At the "edge of combat" movements should lower the adrenalin, lull the senses and produce a false sense of security. While to the observer the outward demeanor is fluid, graceful and mesmerizing, the internal tension, i.e. the ability to act must remain high but unseen. Inside you prepare by generating power and winning internally before a blow is launched. For the opponent it is the calm before the storm. The distance and slowness disarms the beautiful movements while they capture the foes awareness. In the movements themselves we see expanded picture stances, extreme open rhythmic movements all wound up with Pencak. The internal tension must remain high as this slow rhythm can work against us if we allow ourselves to internally relax. The tables could be turned for in truth at the edge of combat the distance can be traveled in the blink of an eye. In fact you may choose to advance on your opponent in the form of a straight keris blade. In this manner it appears that the opponent is either lulled into a slow mental state or actually takes a step towards you. Straight line attacks are normally employed if you are facing an attacker that appears slower than you. Against a faster opponent the attack of the lightning bolt and or wavy keris blade is used (Kilap Attack). In either case the slow rhythm disappears and is replaced by the cyclonic off timing hyper-energy which is linked to the aforementioned footwork patterns. This creates a panic mode in the attacker that can paralyze the senses long enough to allow an angular low level devastating attack against the ankles and knees.

Should this attack fail but the distance remains close an immediate adaptation of the ular sendok (cobra) and ular sawa (python) is taken with its high stance and close leg position. Here the goal is to quickly attack the nerves and muscles of the arms and legs while at the same time launching a barrage of toe point, dragon tail, instep and ball of the foot kicks. The idea is to get the opponent off balance and to take a step back and expose the knee or ankle to being taken out. I must inject a severe warning at this point. The greatest downfall that I have witnessed in many practitioners occurs at this point. Any opponent that remains in kicking range must be met with a fast fluid vicious employment of powerful kicks to keep them off balance and if possible felled. If you can deliver lead leg joint kicks do so at will

until they fall, retreat or fall victim to something else. Even in practice make sure your legs are animated with the thread. Let one kick meld into another and another, your arms and legs should move with equal frequency and intent. If you fail, your defenses can be penetrated so be warned!

If the opponent proves elusive one can either move forward with rapidly changing picture stances or reverse slightly also using the picture stances. If the range suddenly expands again to the edge of combat you must repeat the formula. It is the student's goal to examine which animal mannerisms and elements can be utilized at the various ranges. Each can be adapted to various ranges but some seem to fit into the puzzle better in some places than others. For instance, the crane works very well at close range with its close crane wings but its movements seem better suited to the edge of the circle where the long wing movements are beautiful, rhythmic and lend the desired illusion of openings. The orchestration of correctly piercing the circle against an opponent can truly be an artistic creation of ebbs and flows of energies and feints. These outlines are only food for thought for the inner body of light to feed on. As the thread becomes animated the body will react synergistically provided all of the mannerisms are internalized. Harimau is employed at anytime in the scenario if one falls or finds oneself on unsure footing but rarely used just for its own sake. Exceptions could be if one were too tired to continue standing or against an opponent against whom upright fighting was going nowhere.