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Once we strip away the formalities, traditions, posturing, figureheads and performance elements from our martial art, we are left with the simplicity of the fight or what is aptly known as *'the probable'*
. From a combative perspective, the countless hours and years of training are merited only by what happens in combat.

The physical aspect and mindset play an imperative part of how the individual handles themselves in the fight, but techniques will be stripped down to bare basics. The particular flamboyant patterns of footwork you practice will immediately be disrupted causing them to collapse. The martial flow that comes with the practice of the preferred art will be broken, the implementation of your structured drills will cease to find an opening. So now what do you do... you fight.

In a fight, you will undoubtedly punch, elbow, head-butt, wrestle, grapple, kick with nothing being higher than a knee strike and perhaps you may manage to block which will result in a fixed guard position as opposed to any parrying method. That's all you will actually use in the extent of your entire martial system. All the training in pressure points, joint manipulation, open hand strikes, high kicks, pattern drills, control and restraint locks will likely never surface in reality based combat.

I am not saying that the practice in the units above holds no worth. In fact it does hold great value and this is why: in order for our fighting methods to work beyond the classroom walls, we must learn everything to be aware of what to utilize. The deduction is to simplify, so in order to be effective with the probable, one must have fully explored the possible.

There will naturally be arguments from individuals that have found themselves in a situation where a joint manipulation technique helped them in a scuffle on the street or in a bar. And that is why we train in all aspects of our system for the possible that may occur. But if we looked at ten brawls on the streets, we would be lucky to find two that employ anything other than the basic striking and invading methods.

By training in all the fundamentals, both physically and spiritually, while maintaining the traditions and ideology set out in the particular martial art design, we can see what is possible and even further evolve the techniques. A simple moment of stepping or arm placement can be a breakthrough in training. Finding your distance or an opening that was not laid out in the original drill is the very definition of the possible. So it is vital that we sustain all our learnings in the initial martial arts blueprint. But for your art to really work effectively on the street, we must focus on its probable. Meaning what is likely to happen as opposed to what could possibly happen.

Stick to the core principals of combat, hit and move, some may reverse this notion with move and hit as that's generally the thinking in martial arts, to counter the attacker and this trail of practice works too. But when you are in that moment and the fight is imminent, I do want to be waiting for an attack to work off that may result in an opportunity. I want to take the opportunity by creating one. Your first move could be your last move, so make it count. Engage the attack and strike first then reposition, never staying in the last position your attacker saw you in. This not only disorientates your opponent, but it allows you to set up a new attack from another angle, like flanking or from behind. Nothing happens on the spot as generally practiced in the classroom. Real fighting is constant readjustment. This movement could be a slight shift in body positioning or a big step to control a safe distance while maintaining the space you need to engage.

The probable versus the possible should also extend to weapons training. In all martial styles that have a weapons base in their system, we tend to find ourselves practicing obscure weapons such as the sai, katana, keris, butterfly knives, spear, broadsword, nunchaku or shuriken. Once again it is essential to maintain tradition and keep the practice of these weapons alive, but the emphasis should be on the probable type of weapon that you can expect to be used on the streets. Not many people will be attacking you with a pair of nunchakus. In actuality, the likely weapon you or your attacker will use is a knife or a stick. These may not necessarily come in their actual given design, meaning the knife could be implemented in the form of a broken bottle and the stick could be a piece of scrap metal.

The possible works best in this area of martial arts within the conversion, by translating the

implementation from a certain weapons technique into the chosen weapon you find yourself using or defending against. So most short blade weapons and short to medium sticks can make use of the basic principles implied from your training.



When analyzing the probable of weapons utilized in a reality base setting, we must question the likelihood of a knife fight scenario. A knife fight would imply that you yourself are carrying a blade and it just so happens that your opponent has a knife too.

This type of training was relevant for the South East Asian Majapahit wars, ancient feudal Japan and the rise of the Roman empire. But today we are not going to war on horseback, we are simply going about our daily routine. So blade against blade in real life is more of a fantasy, but let's delve into the world of fiction for the sake of an argument. Let's say we find ourselves in a blade versus blade predicament. The training for this type of territory is relatively unknown even for the modern army. The techniques adopted have more to do with distance, finding that opening to engage the bladed hand and control it while refraining from being cut, which is sure to happen. No matter if you win the fight, you will still suffer some degree of cuts.

Most training in blade versus blade seems to be that your attacker only strikes once with their knife and you counter with multiple stabs. Anybody holding a knife - trained or untrained - will not strike with one singular attack. Just by moving your hand in any direction, you are potentially slicing and slashing. This type of training is ok to begin with, learning your cuts and techniques, but once you have them down you better armor up with protective googles and marked rubber knifes because this will give you a real awakening in just how dangerous and unpredictable a knife fight can be.

Surviving a knife fight depends on reading your opponent and the strategy adopted, but even then, nothing is certain.

With regards to blade versus empty hand, this is a genuine realistic threat, and although the outcome always favors the blade, a level of skill and knowledge will increase a person's odds of surviving a knife attack.

There is no such thing as a professional knife fighter as this term would mean that the person in question has survived multiple knife assaults. In truth, knife attacks are not fights, they are assassinations. As martial artists we are training to better ourselves in mind and body with the initial goal to increase our chances in a fight. We train our body to become a weapon, with the possibility of the unknown occurring. So if you are walking around carrying a knife, then doesn't that make you the bad guy. After all, if you find yourself in a fight and you are the one who pulls a knife on your unarmed opponent, then you've missed the entire point of martial arts.

Now the chances of a stick fight, whereby both fighters are using some form of stick against each other, is extremely doubtful. If you happen to stumble upon a stick just as a fight is about to break out, then you have won the lottery. A more authentic scenario would be that the opponent meaning to harm you has planned their attack, so they are armed with a baseball bat or crowbar. So your training should focus on this kind of situation instead of endless stick drills in which you are disarming your assailant's stick using your own stick. In truth, you are more likely to be fighting empty handed against somebody wielding some kind of stick.

This thesis will no doubt strike a chord with the purists in martial arts, but no matter your grade or experience if you haven't had to use it in reality or at least try to recreate the environment by gloving up, then you really have no idea what is needed in a genuine fight. Students enter our class with the thinking that what they learn will protect and give them a fighting chance. So it is our job as instructors to prepare them for the probable, guiding them in the martial, while maintaining the art in its possible.

Published exclusively for Black Triangle Silat 2019.