

## Connecting the Systems

In my limited time of Martial Study, I've experienced several systems of movement, from as hard as American Boxing, Kick Boxing, and Tae Kwon Do to softer internal systems like Tai Chi & QiGong (with others thrown in for good measure) Ultimately I was introduced and fell in love with the aspects of Filipino and Southeast Asian Martial Arts.

I was fortunate to be exposed to a conceptual based art early in my studies, American Maharlika Kuntaw, (a blended system of which I am a practitioner). Due to the the nature of the art and it's origins, it opened my mind to the possibilities beyond it's own self. It inspired me to continue searching for more. That hunger for more ultimately led me to Natural Spirit International.

I owe my exposure to Datu Kelly S. Worden's method to a friend of mine. He strongly encouraged that I take a closer look at what NSI had to offer me, the combative neophyte.

I noticed many similarities to my current training practices (which had borrowed a lot from Modern Arnis, Wing Chun, and several other systems). Honestly, there's only so many ways to tweak a human body, a particular method that has any real proven effectiveness has a way of propagating itself through the natural selection of logical reasoning. Hence, my feeling of familiarity ... for a time.

What I was not prepared for had nothing to with any particular dark secret skills, or earth shattering 5 step exploding heart techniques. (love the Kill Bill movies ... ) What it did have was a subtle notion ... "connect the systems".

There's a thought, Combative Connecting Tissue. Now understand my true meaning ... I realize that this is not a revolutionary topic for me to expound on. How many times has it been uttered : "absorb what is useful and reject what doesn't work", or some derivation of that basic thought. However, for the first time it really resonated with me. It made sense. It worked. You don't have to abandon your hard earned foundation of movement. Just augment it. Understand it. Find it's true combative essence. Arguably this is the true nature of any Marital Art, followed to it's ultimate conclusion with the right frame of mind. Learn it, refine it, tear it apart, rebuild it, improve it, and finally forget it ... just move.

Suddenly the concepts of "bridging", "taking ground" , "occupying space" etc. , had real meaning to me. Moving through ranges of engagement seemed more effortless than ever before ... simply because of the notion. All of those separate drills, techniques and scenarios now had form and paths to each other.

NSI made my entire method better. It's made me hungry to learn more, to take all of what I have learned and refine, improve, and innovate to a higher degree than I would have pushed for previously. As well as inspiring me to continue amassing all the knowledge that I can possibly absorb, while applying the same open acceptance of potential. You could say that it's made me a Martial "Analyst" as well as an "Artist".

What is your art if not an analysis of yourself ? In the truest meaning off the word "art". Expression. Discovery. Growth.

And of course at the end of the day, if I can kick ass better than the day before, well, I have succeeded in my personal bad ass goals.

Thanks Datu. Here's to training hard and often.

- Matt Lamphere