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## Getting the facts straight

Recently, I was checking the sales ranking for my book on Amazon.com, when I noticed I have finally received a customer review on Amazon. After reading the review, I found myself humbled and dumb founded. The customer who reviewed my book on military knife and hand to hand combat was obviously a practicing martial artist.

He appeared to be one of the "Know it all" types as well. Although much of his review on the layout of my book may be spot on; I was amazed at his blatant ignorance in not knowing the difference between combative training and martial arts. In his own words, "Though the author may know what he is doing in this book, you may already as well. If you took some sort of M.A. class for any period of time that was worth anything, then you would have learned most if not half of these techniques for knife fighting. " I must agree with him on this.

If you take some sort of martial arts class for any period of time; that is worth anything; eventually you may learn half of the techniques in the book. Although I clearly state in the book that my attempt is not to teach specific techniques, but use techniques as a vehicle to drive home principles; and I admit that there are countless numbers of techniques one can learn, not simply limited to my book. This guy "Cliff" is the example of how many can not distinguish the difference between martial art and combative training.

## Distinguishing the difference

Before one can truly distinguish between a martial art or combative training, they must reflect upon the origin of today's practiced martial arts. The term "martial art", refers to a war like art; with martial referring to war. It is true that ages ago during the conception of today's martial arts, the countless numbers of systems and styles were born from military drills and close quarters battle of the time. During the ancient times without the aid of today's modern weaponry and fire power, soldiers were forced to engage in battle with clubs, swords, daggers, spears and often hand to hand. Warriors of those times began to develop tried and true systems of both armed and unarmed combat, much like today. They understood that military units must gain muscle memory in their tactics of choice and saw the need for regimented systems of combat. The methods and techniques of their day required ways to dismount riders off horse back and break or penetrate wooden armor. It is quite obvious that in today's combat environment those techniques would be obsolete. Through out generations and over the centuries the ancient arts



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have been passed from master to student and master to student. The once effective and powerful combative training of the ancients has become an antiquity.

Today the ancient techniques of Samurai and the fighting monks of China can be seen being practiced through training hall windows all over the world. The ancient forms and techniques that were once practical battle tactics have been manipulated by popular media and business ideology. Many practice the ancient martial arts for a plethora of reasons. Some of their reasons are for the very same reasons that the training was developed. People practice for fitness, protection and hobby. Others train simply to preserve the art.

After World War II, the west was introduced to the Asian martial art craze. Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen were exposed to the Asian fighting arts of the Japanese and Philippines and wanted to learn. Many of the indigenous instructors or gurus realized the opportunity to make a buck from the naive westerners and began teaching watered down versions of the fighting arts. Often masters would draw out the training and add flashy, intricate and complicated techniques to the curriculum. It was the flash that would sell to the new western market. Soon even Hollywood would make movies with actors such as Bruce Lee and Chuck Norris demonstrating their athleticism and prowess on screen.

Belt ranking systems were added to help new students feel as if they were progressing and not quit. The once effective techniques for ancient combat were reduced to nothing more than acrobatics with some self protection value. Many of the hidden techniques which were the pride of warriors of old were lost through the simple process of supply and demand. Modern technology and weapons only aided in losing the practical fighting techniques and turning the martial arts into a lucrative but provocative industry. Today there are martial art companies that place their clients on programs known as "black belt plans."

People are forced into contracts that they can not afford to breach for a certain amount of time until they receive their black belts. During the early 20th century the "black belt" rank was respected by many for holding fighting prowess. Today that rank has lost much of that respect. All too often we hear about the black belt who got beat up by a boxer or street fighter. All too often a white belt student can completely annihilate their "black belt" Karate or Kung Fu master during sparring in the training hall. Today the sport of Mixed Martial Arts has proven that the martial arts of old are obsolete to even today's modern training methods. The MMA athletes of today, that hold no belt in any martial art would dominate over more than half of the practitioners of traditional martial arts.



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Traditional martial artists often rely on archaic training methods and spiritual philosophies of a much more primitive time. Where MMA athletes rely on the most up to date drilling and scientific training ideologies. Much more is known today by the general populous on the matters of psychology, physiology, anatomy, physics and the economy of motion. It is the lack of the most up to date sciences that make much of the traditional fighting arts obsolete and inefficient. In essence it is the tradition itself that makes many martial arts training methods in effective and inefficient. Now that we have identified the martial arts, we should compare it to today's modern combatives.

The combative training of today is a product of the military machine. Today's military is more efficient and productive than any in history. The philosophy of doing the most with the least drives the war machine. In World War II Colonels Eric Anthony Sykes and William Fairbairn began to develop a new type of training for soldiers based from their experience in Shanghai and the trenches of World War I. Close Quarter Battle (CQB) or Hand to Hand Combat was the norm in trench warfare and the soldiers fighting it needed to be able to quickly and efficiently kill and immobilize their adversaries. The two men realized that they needed to develop a system for training or ideology of training that would enable masses of troops with no prior experience in martial arts to learn hand to hand combat quickly in a matter of days, not the years often required by martial arts training. This training had to not only be learned quickly, but retained and trained quickly as well. Soldiers on the front and behind the lines needed to be able to react without thinking, relying on muscle memory. In combat the heart rate exceeds 180 beats per minute and all fine motor skills go out the window.

Sykes and Fairbairn realized that many of the extravagant "pressure points" used in traditional martial arts would not be effective. They realized that pressure points were not effective for two reasons. One, the enemy may not feel it under the influence of adrenaline and two; the soldier will more than likely not have the ability of fine motor skills needed in order to strike the target. Therefore the modern combative training was simple easy to retain and concentrated on gross motor skill movement. Because in combat soldiers are all too often sleep deprived and under nourished the techniques taught needed to not rely on physical strength or athletic prowess. Today's combatives are often known for the dirty fighting aspect, not found in traditional martial arts. The warrior codes from long ago no longer apply today, chivalry is dead. Because the combative techniques are taught to such a variety of fighting men who's bodies are not conditioned to desensitizing training; the trainees are taught to strike with only the most structurally stable weapons of the body. A soldier can not afford broken hands and feet on the battle field. It is for many of these reasons that combative training stands far apart from traditional martial arts.



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## In summary

The traditional martial arts, practiced today was actually the combative training for the military of its time. Just as time changes, so did the training. Societies became more educated; moral values and codes have been altered. The world is not as spiritually guided or involved with mysticism as it was during the time traditional martial arts were conceived. The once effective combative techniques of their time, have evolved into an art form surrounded in mystique and the legends of old; enhanced by modern media. Today's combative training is based completely on modern science and need for efficiency. It is of the utmost importance for combative training to adhere to these rules.

- Simple general Principles must be taught
- Must not rely on power or athleticism
- The focus is on destroying whatever the principal comes into contact with
- Efficiency and economy of motion
- Be able to be learned and applied in a very limited amount of time (Days or weeks)

## In conclusion

Combatives training today most definitely contains many of the techniques that one will learn in the traditional martial arts if they attend classes for any period of time. One might think of the two types of training as steak. One is chuck full of fat that is unnecessary and could clog your arteries, the other is a lean hybrid, that contains only the necessary nutrients to keep you going. After reading the review from this guy "Cliff" I immediately went to his profile to learn more about his point of view, so I could see where he's coming from. I wanted to know if his bashing of my book came from arrogance or ignorance. Where he was asked to type a blurb about his interests, contained one phrase. This was his interest "Wing Chun and the variety of ways it is spelled." I immediately realized by this and the number of books with titles like "Kung Fu of Caine" Referring to the Caine from the TV series (Kung Fu), that this fellow was not completely familiar with the differences between martial arts and combative training. Therefore I wanted to



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write this article, with my best effort to demonstrate that when comparing martial arts training to combative training; it is like comparing apples to oranges.

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