

**The Politics of Inner Power: The Practice of
Pencak Silat in West Java**

By

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Declaration

This is my own account of the research and contains as its main content, work which has not been submitted for a degree at any university

Signed,

Ian Douglas Wilson

Abstract

Pencak silat is a form of martial arts indigenous to the Malay derived ethnic groups that populate mainland and island Southeast Asia. Far from being merely a form of self-defense, pencak silat is a pedagogic method that seeks to embody particular cultural and social ideals within the body of the practitioner. The history, culture and practice of pencak in West Java is the subject of this study.

As a form of traditional education, a performance art, a component of ritual and community celebrations, a practical form of self-defense, a path to spiritual enlightenment, and more recently as a national and international sport, pencak silat is in many respects unique. It is both an integrative and diverse cultural practice that articulates a holistic perspective on the world centering upon the importance of the body as a psychosomatic whole.

Changing socio-cultural conditions in Indonesia have produced new forms of pencak silat. Increasing government intervention in pencak silat throughout the New Order period has led to the development of nationalized versions that seek to inculcate state-approved values within the body of the practitioner. Pencak silat groups have also been mobilized for the purpose of pursuing political aims. Some practitioners have responded by looking inwards, outlining a path to self-realization framed by the powers, flows and desires found within the body itself. Others have developed styles that reflect the demands made upon them by their immediate environment.

Viewed historically these changes in the practice of pencak silat provides insights into the impact of broader processes of social and cultural change at the level of individual bodies and the institutions through which they are constructed; a politics of the body, its potentialities, limits and 'legitimate' use.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my good friend, instructor and *saudara sepeguruan* Valente de Jesus, who lost his life in the struggle of his beloved homeland of East Timor. *Viva Timor-Leste.*

Abbreviations and Glossary

D: Dutch, Ind: Indonesian, Sd: Sundanese

<i>ABRI</i>	Ind: Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia (<i>Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia</i>)
<i>aliran</i>	Ind: Style, current
<i>Amengan</i>	Sd: “Play”. High Sundanese term for pencak silat
<i>apal cangkem</i>	Sd: Traditional method of teaching pencak silat in which students must memorise jurus without any verbal explanation from their teacher (Cianjur)
<i>Batur Arek Uring Enggeus</i>	Sd: “They are just ready, we’ve already finished”. A phrase used in Sundanese pencak silat culture
<i>beladiri</i>	Ind: Self-defence
<i>Cianjuran</i>	Sd: Also known as <i>kecapi suling</i> . A musical genre originating from Cianjur involving flutes and a zither
<i>Cikalong</i>	Sd: Pencak silat style developed in Cianjur, West Java in the mid-19 th century by Raden Haji Ibrahim.
<i>Cimande</i>	Sd: Pencak silat style originating from Cimande, West Java. Reputedly developed in the late 18 th century by Abah Kahir. Considered to be the oldest pencak silat style in West Java.
<i>debus</i>	Ind: Performance art/ ritual involving displays of physical invulnerability
<i>DI-TII</i>	Ind: Darul Islam- Islamic Army of Indonesia (<i>Darul Islam-Tentara Islam Indonesia</i>). Rebellion aimed at establishing an Islamic state that occurred in West Java, South Sulawesi, Aceh and South Kalimantan between 1948-1962
<i>GAPSUS</i>	Ind: Special Forces Guard (<i>Garda Pasukan Khusus</i>). Specially trained pencak silat practitioners from Banten
<i>GOLKAR</i>	Ind: ‘Work Group’ (<i>Golongan Karya</i>). Ruling political party during the New Order period

<i>golok</i>	Ind: Machete
<i>guru</i>	Ind: Teacher
<i>ibing</i>	Sd: Dance form of Sundanese pencak silat performed with musical accompaniment
<i>ilmu</i>	Ind: Science, esoteric knowledge
<i>IPSI</i>	Ind: Indonesian Pencak Silat Association (<i>Ikatan Pencak Silat Indonesia</i>). National governing body for Indonesian pencak silat established in 1948.
<i>IPTDI</i>	Indonesian Inner Power Association (<i>Ikatan Perguruan Tenaga Dalam Indonesia</i>)
<i>jawara</i>	Sd: Champion, martial arts expert
<i>jeger</i>	Sd: Tough, hoodlum
<i>jurus</i>	Ind: Direction, movement or series of movements in pencak silat
<i>kampung</i>	Ind: neighbourhood
<i>kesaktian</i>	Ind: supernatural or magical power
<i>kebal</i>	Ind: Physical invulnerability, usually obtained through ascetic or magical practices
<i>kebatinan</i>	Ind: esotericism, mysticism
<i>KONI</i>	Ind: Indonesian National Sports Committee (<i>Komite Olahraga Nasional Indonesia</i>).
<i>KOPASSUS</i>	Ind: Indonesian Special Forces (<i>Komando Pasukan Khusus</i>)
<i>kuda-kuda</i>	Ind: Leg stances in pencak silat
<i>kuntao</i>	Ind: Term for Chinese martial arts found in Southeast Asia
<i>labuhan</i>	Sd: Term from the Cikalong pencak silat style for movements that involve dropping an opponent to the ground
<i>latihan</i>	Ind: Training, instruction

<i>Nampon</i>	Sd: Pencak silat style developed by Wah Nampon in Bandung in the 1930's. The style focuses upon the development of inner power, referred to as <i>spierkracht</i>
<i>maenpo</i>	Sd: "Lose oneself in play" or "play of punches". Sundanese term for pencak silat
<i>Margaluyu</i>	Sd: 'Path of Harmony'. Pencak silat school focused upon inner power, developed by Andadinata in Bandung.
<i>menak</i>	Sd: Sundanese aristocracy
<i>murid</i>	Ind: Student, pupil
<i>ngadu jajaten</i>	Sd: Contest of strength
<i>olahraga</i>	Ind: Sport, physical exertion
<i>opas</i>	D: Guards employed by the Dutch at government controlled plantations during the colonial period
<i>Pancasila</i>	Ind: The official ideology of the Republic of Indonesia, consisting of: monotheism; a just and civilised humanity; nationalism; representative consensual democracy, and social justice
<i>pendekar</i>	Ind: Honorific title for a recognised pencak silat master
<i>perguruan</i>	Ind: Learning institution, school
<i>pertalekan</i>	Ind: An oath or pledge taken by a pencak silat student
<i>pesantren</i>	Ind: Traditional Muslim boarding school
<i>peupeuhan</i>	Sd: Punch
<i>PKI</i>	Ind: Indonesian Communist Party (<i>Partai Komunis Indonesia</i>)
<i>PPSBBI</i>	Ind: Indonesian Association of Bantenese Silat and Culture (<i>Persatuan Persilatan dan Seni Budaya Banten Indonesia</i>)
<i>PPSI</i>	Ind: Indonesian Pencak Silat Union (<i>Persatuan Pencak Silat Indonesia</i>). West Java based pencak silat organisation established in Bandung in 1957

<i>preman</i>	Ind: Thug, petty criminal
<i>rasa antel</i>	Sd: Sensitivity to touch. Principle in the Cikalong style of pencak silat
<i>rasa anggung</i>	Sd: Acute judgement of distance. Term used in Cikalong pencak silat
<i>rasa sinar</i>	Sd: Term for heightened intuitive sense developed by advanced Cikalong practitioners
<i>Sanalika</i>	Sd: ‘In an instant’; pencak silat style created in Cianjur by Raden Utuk Sumadipraja in the early 20 th century.
<i>satria (ksatria)</i>	Ind: Knight, warrior
<i>Sera</i>	Pencak silat style from the Bogor/Depok area, reputed to have been created by Abah Sera, a student of Abah Kahir
<i>silsilah</i>	Ind: Genealogy, family tree
<i>SMI</i>	Ind: Indonesian Young Knights (<i>Satria Muda Indonesia</i>). Pencak silat school established in the 1980s by Prabowo Subianto
<i>Sumber Daya Manusia</i>	Ind: Human resources
<i>Syahbandar</i>	Pencak silat style reputed to have been created by Mama Kosim (1776-1880). From the Purwakarta area of West Java.
<i>Tadjimalela</i>	Sd: Pencak silat style developed in Bandung in the early 1970s by Raden Djadjat Kusumadinata.
<i>tarekat</i>	Ind: A sufi order; Islamic mystical brotherhood
<i>tenaga dalam</i>	Ind: Inner power
<i>tepak tilu</i>	Sd: Drum pattern used in musical accompaniment to pencak silat in West Java
<i>Timbangan</i>	Sd: Martial arts style developed in Bandung by Raden Anggakusumah. It has many technical and philosophical similarities with the Japanese martial art Aikido
<i>ulama</i>	Ind: Islamic religious teacher/scholar

<i>ulin</i>	Sd: “Movement”. A common term used to refer to pencak silat in West Java.
<i>usik</i>	Sd: ‘Disturb’. The term is commonly used in reference to performing pencak silat in West Java.
<i>Wali Songo</i>	Ind: Nine Saints believed to have brought Islam to Java.
<i>ziarah</i>	Ind: Devotional visit to the grave of an ancestor or spiritually powerful figure often with the intention of obtaining spiritual or material benefits.

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