



# The Adaptation Strategy of *Pencak Silat Singa Dorang* in West Java: An Ethnography Study

Irpan A. Rahman<sup>(✉)</sup> and M. Yoesoef

Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia  
irpanalirahman@gmail.com

**Abstract.** The aim of this research is to reveal the adaptation strategy of Indonesian martial art through the *Community* (Perguruan) of Pencak Silat Singa Dorang in West Java. The analysis is prioritized in the form of adaptation strategy studies that are being carried out and there are few comparisons with adaptation strategies implemented in other areas. The authors conducted an ethnography approach as the main research method. Furthermore, the authors use observation, interview, and library research technique to collect and complete the data. And the descriptive analytical method needed to process the data in strengthening and providing solutions to the research. The result of the research is that the adaptation strategy revealed on the community of Pencak Silat Singa Dorang in west Java. There are 4 adaptations strategy of Pencak Silat Singa Dorang that creates some aspects, they are (1) Mental Spiritual Aspect, (2) Cultural Arts Aspect, (3) Martial Aspect, and (4) Sports Aspect. Thus, the preservation of pencak silat Singa Dorang is needed as the local martial art, because it creates the cultural awareness in preserving the local arts especially in kecamatan Pameungpeuk, Garut, west Java.

**Keywords:** Pencak silat · Adaptation strategy · West Java · Ethnography

## 1 Introduction

Pencak Silat is a work created by humans in an effort to protect themselves or others from the threat of danger posed by wild animals or by humans. Pencak Silat is not only a means of physical protection, but also spiritual peace. By mastering Pencak Silat, human mental strength will increase and spiritually feel safe because they are not afraid to face the danger anymore.

Shamsuddin [1] states that there is influence of China and India to pencak silat as the martial arts. This is understandable because indeed Malay culture (including pencak silat) is an open culture which has adapted to various cultures brought by the traders from India, China, Arabia, Turkey, and others. In term of Indonesia, Wilson [2] has written very interesting history of several pencak silat communities in West Java through his research titled “*The Politics of Inner Power: The Practice of Pencak Silat in West Java*”. To strengthen his research he witnessed several Sundanese traditional performances such as *kendang pencak*, *debus*, *kuda ronggeng*, *jaipongan*, *tepak tilu*, *rampak kendang*,

*kecap suling*, and *benjang* in every governmental ceremonies, cultural festivals and local celebrations.

The progression of Pencak Silat in terms of its function as a martial art itself turned out to have two directions that seemed to be different. The first is martial arts which has been legalized as a sport at the national and even world level. And the second is martial arts which leads to the preservation of the purity of the traditional teachings of Pencak Silat. Meanwhile, Sedyawati [3] explains that pencak and dance have the same two basic characteristics, both of which are formed or colored by the culture that surrounds them. Pencak and dance have cultural meanings, namely their functions and uses in a cultural system. Furthermore, Wahyuni, et al. [4] analyzed the Characteristics of Minangkabau Dance Style, *Mulo Pado Dance* and *Benten Dance* emphasizing that both are affecting the character of pencak silat. Rosala, et al. [5] found that the variant of the *Ibing Pencak Topeng Pendul dance* in Karawang, West Java as a type of dance that has strong roots in the martial art of pencak silat. The developing of traditional arts of pencak silat have been limited to *ibing pencak*, *tepak dua*, *tepak tilu*, and *paleredan*. The pattern and variety of movements cannot be separated from the influence of the movements of pencak silat in West Java.

The dualism in terms of martial arts that occurs in Pencak Silat seems to be very obvious to understand. Self-defense using traditional pencak silat “moves” (*jurus*) cannot be used in self-defense on sports field, which is competed at the national level because collided with the strict rules that castrated the traditional Pencak Silat moves themselves. Suwaryo [6] argues that pencak silat can be classified into a form of culture in the form of martial arts that have certain patterns and have their own code of conduct. Pencak silat is a human activity in society that is concrete and can be observed.

Regardless the dualism of Pencak Silat whether its function as the art and entertainment, the society must admit that Pencak Silat is the ancestral cultural heritage of Indonesian people that must be preserved. It would be embarrassing if the powerful of *moves* (*gerakan*) from various traditional Pencak Silat *genre* (*aliran*) forced to become extinct, crushed by the regeneration process that is not really smooth or getting disappear. In fact, various traditional *moves* can be combined into the modern Pencak Silat *genre* as a sport field.

The problem faced in the field of preserving the art of Pencak Silat, is how to grow the interest of young generation to like and love the art of Pencak Silat?. The continuation of the first question is how to create an adaptation strategy that is in accordance with the wishes to the young then combined with the beauty, efficacy, authority, and honor of the Pencak Silat art *moves* itself?. So, the competition that based on aesthetics pencak silat arts, namely *wiraga*, *wirama*, and *wirasa* (see [7]) is essentially needed as one of the strategies to preserve the local martial arts.

## 2 Methods

This study uses qualitative method with an ethnographic approach to analyze and describe the existence and adaptation strategy of Pencak Silat Singa Dorang in kecamatan Pameungpeuk, Garut, west Java. The research started from July 2020 and ended on December 2021. Furthermore, the researchers use observation, interview, and library

research technique to collect and complete the data. And the descriptive analytical method needed to process the data in strengthening and providing solutions to the research. The support ethnographic method the researchers use some *informans* (local people) to collect the data. However, there is the main *informan* only recruited from the locals who has high authority to support collecting the data on ethnographic research activity.

Creswell [8] explains that ethnography is a qualitative design in which the researcher describes, interprets, shares, and learned the patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group. As both a process and an outcome of research. Ethnography is a way of studying a culture-sharing group as well as the final, written product of that research. In addition, Surbakti [9] says that theory in social research is very useful for providing patterns of data interpretation, connecting one study to another, providing framework so that concepts and variables get the meaning, and allowing us to interpret data that is larger than the findings obtained from its study. So, in this research the descriptive analytical method needed to process the data in strengthening and providing solutions. Furthermore, the synthetic analysis technique uses by concluding different opinions or views to find more complete as an art the unity of opinion about pencak silat. And the literature research carried out by doing inventory, systematizing, and classifying literature on martial arts, especially the artistic values on it.

### 3 Results and Discussion

Koentjaraningrat [10] states that the form of culture as objects had made by the humans. Thus, learning from nature is the best idea of ancient humans to be able to survive in the face of danger. Inhabitants of nature, both flora and fauna around humans, pay attention to their motion, character, and nature then take the essence and apply it as the “moves” based on the character. For example, the “moves” created to imitate the movements of tigers, monkeys, snakes, and birds. Because the environmental conditions are hilly and rocky, the movement is becoming a lot of jumping creation. People who live in the mountains used to stand, move, walk with a strong footstep to keep from falling easily during moving on uneven ground. Usually creates a martial art that has the characteristics of a sturdy horse that doesn’t move much. The hand movements are more agile, many in variety and powerful in their usefulness. People who live in marshy areas, flat and grasslands area usually walk and run quickly, so their foot movements become agile. They created a self-defense that uses the feet more as self-defense. Finally, each region has a martial arts that is unique and different from other regions, so that various martial arts styles arise. Then the meeting between residents of one area with another, causing the exchange of martial arts improve the quality of self-defense on each area.

#### 3.1 Adaptation Strategy in Terms of Mental Spiritual Aspect

Notosoejitno [11], explained that the rules of pencak silat consist of four rules as the unit, they are ethics (mental-spiritual), logic (martial art), aesthetics (arts), and athletics (sports). So, we may say that the adaptation strategy of traditional Pencak Silat on Singa Dorang community viewed from the Mental Spiritual aspect builds and develops someone’s personality and noble character.

*"Saha wae nu boga Singa Dorang teu meunang poho ka sholat lima waktu pokona mah", kata Abah Engker.*

(Anyone who owns the Singa Dorang's move (jurus) is not allowed to leave the five times daily prayer," said Abah Engker).

Based on the statement above mentioned by the master (guru besar) that the mental-spiritual aspect is very important and dominant during both training and becoming formidable fighter on the community of *pencak silat Singa Dorang*. It is common or even mandatory that the students of Singa Dorang community required to offer a prayer to God Almighty before starting or ending training.

However, every action will always be values and norms that limit the space for human movement, so that the direction of movement accordance with the rules that have been set together in the community. So, it is termed in *Pencak Silat* as spiritual mental development.

### 3.2 Adaptation Strategy in Terms of the Cultural Arts Aspect

The term of *pencak* generally describes as the art of *Pencak Silat* dance, with traditional music and clothing. The arts in *Pencak Silat* have a very close relationship. Exercise was originally intended for self-defense from enemy attacks. Moreover, *Pencak Silat* of Singa Dorang community is also enriched by the inclusion of elements in the form of movement patterns which commonly called *kembang* or *ibing*. They called their *ibing* with *"Ibing eusi"*. Abah Engker said,

*"pokona lamun ngibing kudu aya eusi, entong kosong."*

(You must use the power of Singa Dorang on *Ibing*, never powerless).

*Pencak silat Singa Dorang* community uses their *Ibing eusi* on any stages where they perform. In general, various styles of *Pencak Silat* have *ibing* movement and very diverse movement patterns are used. However, the overall movement pattern in *ibing* has elements which are divided into three parts, namely *wiraga*, *wirama*, and *wirasa*.

### 3.3 Adaptation Strategy in Terms of the Martial Aspect

Furthermore, related to the geographical conditions and livelihoods (farmers and planters), even in the martial arts field they tend to choose patterns or moves that are also adapted to the characteristics of their own geographical conditions and livelihoods. The movement is following the geographical pattern is of course followed by the inhabitants of nature (fauna) itself, such as the movement of a tiger (*pamacan*), and monkey (*pamonyet*). Regarding movements that follow the movements of the fauna in several moves, *Pencak Silat* has indeed been around for a long time in Pameungpeuk. Based on the community's name namely Singa (*pamacan*) Dorang (belang) convince that they use the *pamacan's* or tiger's moves (jurus) on their movement. Seeing the observation pattern of the animal, Koentjaraningrat [12] said that the same as the character of the two living things (humans and animals), which is always studying the surrounding conditions.

The description that the Singa Dorang martial arts can be balanced with the existing of silat movements or *moves* (jurus) in West Java. There are basic principles behind the distinctive characteristics, which also played by the community pencak silat Singa Dorang. As mentioned by Abah Engker Karyana (the master),

*"kuda-kuda kudu kuat jeung kudu rada ngajebrag, tingali musuh, pokona ulah di handap wae, gerakanna kudu teteg."*

(must have the strong-wide position, always face the opponent, do not always on step down position, the pencak has steady rhythmic).

This is different with the principle of non-silat of martial arts movements. For example, Karate or Kuntau, which has a characteristic bluffing movement, tries to weaken the opponent's guts through the effect of showing off the movement, and screams that, can be seen from some characteristics of the movements, they are:

- (1) Firm, hard, and rigid all the time.
- (2) Requires a lot of space, lots of jumps, attacks, and somersaults.
- (3) Many stances raise arms over shoulders.
- (4) Lots of noise (shouting).
- (5) Use certain breathing.
- (6) There are almost no low and lower play.
- (7) Many variations of kicks.

### 3.4 Adaptation Strategy in Terms of Sports Aspect

This strategy means that the physical aspect of Pencak Silat is important. Fighters trying to adjust the mind with body work. The competition is part of this aspect. However, the sports aspect as the adaptation strategy of the community on traditional pencak silat such as Singa Dorang is only on training or practical activities and performances. Abah Engker Karyana said, *"lamun jeung tampil mah teu nanaon."* (It is oke if we are invited as the performer only). This traditional silat community does not involve in any competitions both local and international. They have done this tradition for generations. Therefore, the silat dance or *Ibing eusi* has been created by them. Pencak Silat as a self-defense sport that is currently worldwide does not seem to be an attractive way for Singa Dorang as the traditional pencak silat. Even more, developing their fighter careers in order to be able to achieve in every worldwide championship events.

## 4 Conclusion

The adaptation strategy of traditional Pencak Silat reveals on Singa Dorang community. The Mental Spiritual aspect builds and develops someone's personality and noble character. *Pendekar* Pencak and the masters often had to go through stages of meditation, asceticism, or other mystical aspects to reach the highest level of knowledge. However, the sports aspect as the adaptation strategy of Pencak Silat Singa Dorang occurs on training or practical activities and performances only. However, this traditional silat

community does not involve in any competitions both local and international. They have done this tradition for generations. Therefore, the create *Ibing eusi* as the silat dance. Thus, the preservation of pencak silat Singa Dorang is needed as the local martial art because it creates the cultural awareness in preserving the local arts especially in kecamatan Pameungpeuk, Garut, west Java.

**Authors' Contributions.** I.A. Rahman and M. Yoesoef contributed to the design and implementation of the study as well as analyze results and the writing of the manuscript.

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