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Pencak Silat

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Pencak Silat Master Class

Silat as a Performing Art

Introduction to Pencak Silat

Pencak Silat or Silat is a generic term for the styles of a Martial Art that is deeply rooted in culture which originated from Indonesia and the Malay Archipelago. In Malaysia alone, there are some 500 styles of Silat schools. In Indonesia, it boasts 200 more of such Silat schools. Interest in Silat has grown exponentially in the 20th century, and it is now practiced all over the world. Other countries that are known to actively practice Silat include United Kingdom, Netherlands, Nepal, France, India, Algeria and many others.

Types of Pencak Silat

The styles and schools of Pencak Silat differ from one another with regards to which aspects are emphasised.

The name of the different styles can be derived from various origins - after a geographical area, city or district, an animal, a spiritual or combative principle, a person, or a physical action.

Examples of how names of schools are derived:

- *Setia Hati* which means "faithful heart", is named to represent a spiritual principle.
- *Mustika Kwitang* is named after the Kwitang district in the city of Jakarta.
- *Minangkabau Silat* is named after an ethnic group, the Minangkabau people.

'Pencak' & 'Silat'

Pencak is attacking and defensive movement in a form of rhythmic dance, done in a traditional custom, which is usually performed in public.

Silat is the essence of pencak - the knowledge of fighting or lethal self-defence that cannot be performed in public.

4 Aspects of Pencak Silat

1: Mental-Spiritual

The mental and spiritual development in Pencak Silat is aimed at achieving inner peace and spiritual balance by learning how to control both body and mind.

Natural techniques used include breathing techniques, forms of meditation and concentration, praying, and continued development of the five senses amongst others.

2: Self-Defense (*Bela Diri*)

The Silat practitioner can defend himself or herself using these techniques against opponent(s), barehanded or with the use of weapons.

3: Arts and Cultural (*Seni-Budaya*)

It is a fusion of art and culture which consists of traditional music and costumes.

The movements created and designed are still based on self-defence but made softer and in dance form with emphasis on precision and decorative/aesthetic qualities.

4: Sports (Olahraga)

An important physical aspect which cultivates good spirit of sportsmanship for Silat practitioners in competitions and tournaments.

Tournaments are graded according to style, technique, tactic and ethics. It is also practiced to promote physical strength and conditioning for the overall health of mind and body.

Competitions consist of:

- *Pertandingan* - full contact fights
- *Tunggal* (Single), *Ganda* (Double) and *Regu* (Team) – artistic demonstrations

Weapons in Silat

Pencak Silat is often viewed as a martial art that focuses on the use of weapons, and in particular, bladed weapons.

Silat Traditional Weapons:

- Keris
- Sarong
- Kerambit
- Pedang
- Pisau
- Parang
- Golok



Traditional Silat Attire



World of Pencak Silat

Currently, South East Asian countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore are the giants in Pencak Silat. Below are a few of the Silat organisations around the world:

- **PERSILAT** - Persekutuan Pencak Silat Antarabangsa (International Pencak Silat Federation)
- **IPSI** - Ikatan Pencak Silat Indonesia (Indonesia Pencak Silat Affiliation)
- **PESAKA Malaysia** - Persekutuan Silat Kebangsaan Malaysia (Malaysian National Silat Federation)
- **PERSISI** - Persekutuan Silat Singapore (Singapore Silat Federation)
- **EPSF** - European Pencak Silat Federation

Pencak Silat Performance

In a Traditional Malay Wedding (*Silat Pengantin*)



Wedding Silat (*Silat pengantin*) is a Silat movement that is performed in front of the bride and groom during a traditional Malay wedding ceremony. This cultural performance can be found in the Malay Archipelago mainly in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and parts of Indonesia.

Origin of Wedding Silat

During the early Malay civilisation, Pencak Silat was performed in front of the King (*Sultan*) of a country. In addition to being an aesthetic performance, it also functioned to showcase the skills and fighting capabilities of his commander and warriors. This was important as it was the era in which wars between countries were frequent. Such performances served as an assurance that the country would be secure and well-defended, should there be any unwanted interference from opposing countries.

Wedding Silat in Today's Context

This performance is still practiced as a form of heritage. Although it serves a different purpose now, many aspects of the performance are still preserved. Today, it is usually performed during weddings as newlyweds are regarded to be the 'king' and 'queen' for the day.

It is generally performed twice:

1. Performed solely for the groom as to welcome his arrival at the bride's house.
2. Performed for the bridal couple upon their arrival at the groom's house.

Significance of Wedding Silat Movements

Each movement of the wedding Silat has its own meaning:

- Respect to the couple (*Salam hormat*)
- Blessing the couple (*Merestui mempelai*)
- Protection of the couple (*Perlindungan mempelai*)
- Showing off one's prowess to those around (*Mencabar sekeliling*)

Etiquette of Wedding Silat

The wedding Silat has to be performed with great respect and etiquette. When performing the wedding Silat, the following must be observed:

- There should not be any aggressive movements directed towards the couple. Punches should be pointed downwards or sideways.
- Attacking moves cannot be done in full. Example: lunges to be done slowly and not fully extended.
- All movements must be graceful and non-violent so as to be respectful to the couple.
- It is traditionally believed that the wedding Silat has to be presented in odd numbers.
- There should not be any movements where the back is shown to the couple.
- The performer should not make any utterances when performing.
- There should not be movement to the side of the couple.
- No weapons should be used when performing.
- The feet must not be lifted too high.

