

REVITALIZED “PENCAK SILAT” (MARTIAL ART) OF ACEH CULTURE AS EDUCATIONAL MEDIUM FOR CHARACTER BUILDING

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ABSTRACT

Aceh culture of Sumatra Island has many specific heritages and one of them is “Pencak Silat” (martial art). Pencak Silat is not only showing a way of person to maintain or defend themselves, but it teaching youth how to have good characters and behaviors. This paper discusses the martial arts that has long existed and evolved over time, especially in Aceh culture and its potential elements to be revitalized as educational medium to shape pupils characters. In the local area of Aceh, the revitalization of martial arts plays an important role to support the central government program of character building from elementary school until university levels. Some of the gestures of martial arts train the school pupils to follow the rules and manage themselves in facing various challenges. It is necessary to revitalize the martial arts in Aceh to form the educational learning process in schools.

Keywords: Aceh culture, pencak silat (martial arts), revitalized, education, medium

INTRODUCTION

The cultural heritages of Indonesia are very diverse. One of her cultural heritages is *Pencak Silat*. Basically, Pencak Silat or martial arts as part of Indonesian culture and has grown in line with the historical development of Indonesian society. It is widely known in Indonesia and even begins to evolve to neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, the southern Philippines and southern Thailand, precisely in Pattani province. According to the spread and development of ethnic Malay Archipelago Pencak Silat adopted local culture such as Aceh of Sumatra Island. In English Pencak Silat is associated with the term martial art. Thus, it has become associated with the fighting arts of eastern Asia, it originally referred to the combat systems of Europe as early as the 1550s. The term is derived from Latin, and means "arts of Mars", the Roman god of war (Clements, 2006). Draeger (1979) states that some authors have argued that fighting arts or fighting systems would be more appropriate on the basis that many martial arts were never "martial" in the sense of being used or created by professional warriors. Historically, before the modern weaponry discovered, humans defend themselves only with their bare hands. At that time, the ability to fight with bare hands developed as a way to attack and then used to improve their physical ability.

In Indonesian context, Acehnese pencak silat borrows its foundation from silat Melayu and *silek* Minangkabau, particularly the arm-seizing techniques of the former and the ground-sitting postures of the latter. The Aceh style is comparatively more aggressive overall. Acehnese pencak silat favours bladed weaponry, specifically knives and swords. The primary weapon of Acehnese pencak silat is the *rencong*, type of knife originating in Aceh, Indonesia. Originally a fighting weapon, it is most often seen today in the martial art of silat and worn during traditional ceremonies. The *rencong* is slightly L-shaped and has a sharp blade with a slightly convex back (Zonneveld, 2002). The blade can vary in length from 10 to 50 cm. The

blade can be straight or cranked like a kris. It is held in a scabbard of wood, ivory, horn, or sometimes even silver or gold. The *rencong* is worn on one's belt around the waist.

The kris (dagger) is used as well but the native *rencong* (a blade of Aceh) takes precedence. Located on Sumatra's north coast on the westernmost tip of the archipelago, Aceh was the first port of call for traders sailing the Indian Ocean, and local blades show an Indian-Muslim influence. Unlike the more typical rattan shield, the Acehnese buckler is also of Indian derivation, made from metal and with five or seven knobs on the surface.

Based on the above explanation, this paper tries to seek the potential elements of Pencak Silat of Aceh culture as a developing medium for education and character building. The need of revitalization of Pencak Silat in Aceh is concerning with the attempts to equip the school pupils in challenges of future competitiveness in Southeast Asia.

Understanding of Martial Arts

Understanding the martial arts concerning with styles, sport, heritage, and socio-cultural aspects. Thus, Martial arts is dealing with self-defense and avoiding and resolving the human conflicts. The trainees are requires a certain level of cooperation to train conflict. This apparent cooperation leads observers remark that, "...movements are fluid and dance-like" (O'Connor, 1999:4). A martial art is a style of combat, in many instances directed towards the self-defense. In the common usage, the word applies to the systems of combat developed in the world. There are many martial arts that come from certain countries. They are practiced for many reasons: fighting, self-defense, sport, self-expression, discipline, confidence, fitness, relaxing, and meditation.

It is well known that martial arts had been as one of the practiced sports in many countries. Now some youths all over the world (e.g., Australia: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009; Canada: Ifedi, 2008; Europe: van Bottenburg, Rijnen & Sterkenburg, 2005). Furthermore, in recent years martial arts are believed to create positive educational opportunities for youth in general and specific target groups in particular. Educators and welfare workers have increasingly made use of martial arts as an education tool to work with socially deprived youth (Abrahams, 2004; Bosch, 2008; Theeboom, De Knop & Willeman, 2008; Zivin et al., 2001). Argues Jones (2002: x) that the martial arts are "stylized behaviours that relate to war, but should be distinct from actual battlefield engagements. Elements of these behaviors comprise a general model." He recounts the following characteristics to describe this model:

- 1) *Kata* (swear)
- 2) Emphasis on shock-combat
- 3) Ritual
- 4) Techniques, repetition, and drill
- 5) Sparring
- 6) Entertainment
- 7) Seeking internal power
- 8) Ranking and indications of rank
- 9) Connection with society elites.

It may sump up that above list to defining characteristics based on the observation (Jones 2002: xii): "As with all syndrome-type descriptions, not all of the foregoing elements must be present to identify a martial art, but when a majority are found, a martial art is being observed". In Bahasa Indonesia, the term *bela diri* is used to mean martial art, and in essence

the Indonesian fighting arts are meant as one's defense against perceived threat and assault. Other than physical training, they often include spiritual aspects to cultivate inner strength, inner peace and higher psychological ends (Black Belt Magaine, 2015). But today, Indonesian martial arts are synonymous with *pencak silat*. Indeed, the term was coined as an umbrella term to refer for a class of related martial arts originating in the Indonesian archipelago (Draeger, 1992).

Pencak Silat

The term *pencak silat* is used mainly in Indonesia. Pencak silat was chosen in 1948 as a unifying term for the Indonesian fighting styles. It was a compound of the two most commonly used words for martial arts in Indonesia. *Pencak* was the term used in central and east Java, while *silat* was used in Sumatra and Borneo. In Minang usage, pencak and silat are seen as being two aspects of the same practice. Pencak is the essence of training, the outward aspect of the art which a casual observer, is permitted to witness as performance. Silat is the essence of combat and self-defense, the true fighting application of the techniques which are kept secret from outsiders and not divulged to students until the guru deems them ready. While other definitions exist, all agree that silat cannot exist without pencak, and pencak without silat skills is purposeless (Draeger, 1979). Pencak silat is a full-body fighting form incorporating strikes, grappling and throwing in addition to weaponry. Every part of the body is used and subject to attack. Pencak silat was practiced not only for physical defense but also for psychological ends (Black Belt Magaine, 2015).

Sheikh Shamsuddin (2005) has stated that the origin of the words *pencak* and *silat* has not been proven. Some believe that pencak comes from the Sanskrit word *pancha* meaning five, or from the Chinese term *pencha* or *pungcha* which implies parrying or deflecting, and striking or pressing. Notosoejitno (2001: 1) states that seen from the figure, the profile or display, pencak silat in Indonesia is divided into three;

1. Original phrase of *pencak silat* is the martial arts that originated from local and ethnic communities in Indonesia.
2. Non-original pencak silat, mostly from Kung Fu, Karate and Jujitsu.
3. Mixed martial arts, a mix between original and non-original pencak silat.

Pencak silat might be categorized as a martial, a dance, or a form of self-defence. For instance, De Zoete and Spies (1938) have been watching two girls performing pencak silat movements, made the observation that “There was no idea of a fight, only a slow dance based on the already very stylised fighting movements of Pentjak [sic]” (p. 225). It is perhaps unsurprising that some martial arts combine elements of dance.

Many styles have been identified or observed in the Pencak Silat Performances. Krismantari (2015) points out that over 150 styles of pencak silat are recognised in Indonesia, although the actual number of existing systems is well beyond that. Older methods are typically identified with specific ethno-cultural groups or particular regions. After Indonesia's independence, pencak silat adapted itself in the context of modern sport and, in some cases, religion. (Uwe, 2011).

Pencak Silat from Aceh is rarely heard. However, so far Acehnese should be proud of this heritage. Since January 2012 Institution of Aceh Traditional Culture has been established named Busoë (Bersatu Silet Nanggroe) by Abu Siwah. Previously, he met a place for Pencak Silat called Siwah which was formally registered in 2001 in Lhokseumawe. He has a desire to strengthen the institution of martial arts spread throughout Aceh.

Revitalized Pencak Silat as Educational Medium

Revitalize the heritage plays an important role in cultural sustainability and spirituality. Pencak Silat needs a modernization touch to uplift the self-defense arts in order to provide a good deal of work in youth education. Martial arts can serve as an identity building and educational medium of transition, or bridging, from traditional to modern, and from rural to urban societies. Educating social competence, and coping with aggression are important educational aspects of Pencak Silat. Another equally important aspect is the possibility this self-defense art that can offer is mentality. As an educational medium for character building should be better with Pencak Silat training.

It is known that martial arts had been included in the world of education. In many Indonesian schools, from elementary to university, Pencak Silat has become part of extra-curricular activities. Even Pencak Silat has become one of the sports that are matched in various championships both national to world levels. Pencak Silat gives the youth to unite the nation and raises the dignity and degrees of the nation of Indonesia in the world.

CONCLUSIONS

Pencak Silat or martial arts in Aceh culture had been integrated and revitalization program of this heritage is necessary to:

1. Help the youth to learn the challenges in life either in the forms of physical endurance or strength and intellectuality as well as strategy of self-defense.
2. Facilitate the pupils in schools to the fairness and sportiveness as a mental model in the character educational process.
3. Train the pupils in collaboration with other people and respect others properly. These ways of behaving in the social interactions make pupils better in the future.

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