



By Dr. Lee Wilson

Pesilat Dr. Lee Wilson has been a student of Pencak Silat for over two decades. He has studied in various silat systems including Sileik Harimau, Cimande and Kuntao. I can personally vouch for Dr. Wilson having shared many training sessions with him in the past. This article is a prologue to one of two books Dr. Wilson is writing; this particular section of his first book focuses on Indonesia's pencak silat within its country. I look forward to reading the finished publication in the near future.

—Guru Scott McQuaid

In Indonesia I have carried out fieldwork in West Sumatra, West Java, Jakarta and Bali on the martial art of Pencak Silat, and I continue to train in the art in Cambridge with the members of the CU Indonesian Martial Arts Society.

The first of two books currently in preparation is a monograph entitled 'Unity or Diversity: the Constitution of a National Martial Art in Indonesia'. The book offers an account of Indonesian nationalism as refracted through the contested practice of Pencak Silat.

It traces the transformation of Pencak Silat under the patronage of President Soeharto's New Order regime from a system of self defence and spiritual development closely associated with person, place and ethnicity, to its constitution as an international competitive sport and object of national culture.



Through a focus on Pencak Silat as a system of body cultivation, the book makes a unique contribution to the ethnography of the Indonesian state and the New Order administration. Its theoretical value lies in its examination of the limitations in Foucault's thinking on political anatomy as a particular modality of power defining the modern state through an exploration of the body and power in Indonesia.

It reasserts the importance of the study of bodily practice to the field of political anthropology and sheds new light on the intricacies of forms of power and sovereign practices in Indonesia. The book thus makes a significant contribution to the anthropology of Indonesia and the study of Indonesian politics and, more broadly, offers new insights and methodologies to the study of nationalism and the state elsewhere in the world.

[Dr. Lee Wilson's Research Summary](#)

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