

ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY AS THE FOUNDATION FOR THE CONTINUITY OF *SILAT BUHUN SINGA DORANG* IN PAMEUNGPEUK

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ABSTRACT

Silat as a traditional martial art has long evolved among various ethnic groups across the Nusantara archipelago, including the Sundanese, who have developed diverse schools of silat embedded within their cultural heritage. One such school, Silat Buhun Singa Dorang, later experienced a transformation into Pusaka Siliwangi. This study aims to investigate the socio-cultural and spiritual contexts underlying this renaming process and to elucidate the role of Islamic spirituality in sustaining the continuity of both Singa Dorang and Pusaka Siliwangi over time. Employing a qualitative research design within a modern ethnographic framework, this study relies on sensory-based engagement to collect rich, contextually grounded data that were analyzed and presented descriptively. The ethnographic approach is particularly appropriate, as the practice of Silat Buhun is deeply embedded in the socio-religious life of the Sundanese Muslim community in Pameungpeuk. The findings reveal that the transformation from Singa Dorang to Pusaka Siliwangi constitutes a deliberate recontextualization effort that aligns traditional martial values with Islamic ethical principles. This strategic rebranding not only reinforces the cultural identity of the local community but also ensures the endurance of Silat Buhun as a living heritage sustained by Islamic spiritual values amidst socio-cultural change.

Keywords: *Endurance, Metamorphosis, Pameungpeuk, Rebranding, Silat Buhun*

INTRODUCTION

At the 14th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage held in 2019 in Bogotá, Colombia, UNESCO officially inscribed *pencak silat* on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Earlier, in 2012, the Government of Indonesia had recognized *silat* as part of the nation's Intangible Cultural Heritage (WBTb) following a proposal from the West Java Provincial Government. These two designations indicate that *silat* holds significant cultural value, contributing not only to the preservation of Sundanese cultural identity but also to the enrichment of the world's cultural heritage.

Within Sundanese culture in West Java, the martial art of *pencak silat*, locally known as *pencak*, has long been an integral part of social life, particularly among the nobility (*menak*) and students (*santri*) in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) (Yunaidi et al., 2018). In this region, numerous *silat* schools have emerged, evolved, and diversified over time, producing distinctive styles and movements that enrich traditional forms (Wilson, 2020). Several traditional *pencak silat* schools remain well-preserved today, such as Cimande, Sabandar, Ulin Makao, Sera, Cikalong, Sanalika, and Maenpo Peupeuhan (Farhan, 2025). According to Wilson's documentation, at least twenty *pencak silat* schools have existed and developed across Sundanese regions, as listed in Table 1. These schools were founded and expanded by students and alumni of earlier schools, thereby ensuring the continuity and diversification of *silat* traditions in West Java.

Table 1. *Silat* Schools in the West Java Region

No.	School	No.	School
1	Bandrong	11	Timbangan
2	Cigondewah	12	Terumbu
3	Cipecut	13	Jalakrawi
4	Cimacan	14	Sanalika
5	Cimande	15	Tajimalela
6	Cikalong	16	Sera
7	Syahbandar	17	Nampon
8	Kari	18	Sekaregang

No.	School	No.	School
9	Cikaret	19	Kuntulan
10	Madi	20	Ulin Maccao

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

Among these twenty schools, three are particularly well known for their influence within the Sundanese *silat* community: Cimande, Cikalong, and Sabandar. These schools have produced numerous skilled martial artists who later established their own training centers in various regions. One notable example is Abeh Lamsani, a martial artist from Klender, East Jakarta, who trained in the Cimande school during his youth. He later founded the Perkumpulan Silat Kelabang Liar (Wild Centipede Silat Association) in his hometown. The movements he teaches in his *padepokan* (training hall) are distinctive and inspired by the crawling motion of a centipede (*chilopoda*).

Such processes of development and continuity occur naturally for two main reasons. First, *silat* reflects the human instinct for self-defense when confronted with danger. This instinct, expressed through techniques of survival, evasion, and counterattack, becomes institutionalized within organized martial communities, eventually forming structured systems of movement and philosophy. Second, *silat* functions as a traditional art form transmitted across generations. This process of transmission involves oral instruction and direct practice between at least two generations and occurs organically within the community (Vansina, 2014).

During this transmission process, the giver and receiver of knowledge must engage in direct interaction. Initially, the recipient observes or participates in performances, internalizing what is taught without question. Once the process of transmission is complete and the knowledge has been fully absorbed, the recipient often begins to develop new interpretations or innovations. These innovations may arise from dissatisfaction with certain techniques, perceived gaps in the system, or a creative desire to expand or refine existing forms.

The emergence of innovation in *silat* traditions is generally influenced by two

factors. The first concerns the personal development of martial artists who, upon attaining mastery, often feel compelled to further refine their skills by creating new movements or techniques. The second involves intergenerational dynamics within the process of inheritance. Each generation exists within a distinct socio-temporal context, which naturally shapes its perception and practice of tradition. Consequently, the evolution of *silat* reflects an adaptive process in which new ideas emerge to align traditional martial knowledge with the cultural and temporal realities of each generation.

Literature Review

The phenomenon of *silat* described above appears to occur primarily within the broader world of *silat* in general, but not within the domain of *silat buhun* schools. According to Lubis (2015), the term *buhun* refers to cultural expressions or practices considered to be ancient, originating from the early periods of Sundanese civilization that coincided with the establishment of Sundanese kingdoms such as Salakanagara, Tarumanagara, Galuh, Sunda, and Pajajaran. In contrast, Rahman (2023) argues that the word *buhun* is an acronym derived from *kabuyutan* and *karuhun*. The word *kabuyutan* originates from *buyut*, which is associated with sacred places of ancestral worship among the Sundanese, whereas *karuhun* refers to revered ancestral spirits who must be honored. The explanations provided by Lubis (2015) and Rahman (2023) suggest that *buhun* carries sacred connotations and denotes something ancient, inherited from the ancestors.

Given this understanding, it is unsurprising that *silat buhun* remains relatively unknown amid the popularity of modern *silat* competitions and championships. This traditional school of *silat* is preserved only within specific circles and remains largely free from innovation or modernization. Such a condition, while maintaining authenticity, poses certain challenges for its sustainability, although its

extinction can still be prevented through the commitment of its dedicated practitioners.

Based on the interpretations of Lubis (2015) and Rahman (2023), along with the community's continued reverence for the values of *kebhunanan* (ancientness), it can be inferred that the treatment of *silat buhun* within the community differs markedly from that of other *silat* traditions. The community tends to place *silat buhun* in a sacred and exclusive category, accessible only to particular individuals or groups. Consequently, ordinary people often regard this school as esoteric and are reluctant to engage with it.

Furthermore, the term *buhun* itself evokes a sense of mysticism and even fear among laypeople. This perception is reinforced by certain unwritten norms upheld by *silat buhun* practitioners: (1) they are prohibited from modifying or developing the stances they have inherited, and (2) they must refrain from participating in public competitions or matches (Rahman, 2023). Implicitly, these principles command that *silat buhun* be preserved in its original form and remain within the confines of its own community.

These unwritten principles are also observed by the masters of the Singa Dorang *Silat* School, founded by Abah Engker Karyana (AEK). This school has existed for many decades in Pameungpeuk District, located in southern Garut Regency. Preliminary research on Singa Dorang revealed that its *silat* techniques do not derive from any well-known *silat* traditions such as Cimande, Cikalong, or Sabandar. The current Singa Dorang masters who inherited their skills from AEK remain faithful to the original stances, as AEK himself adhered strictly to the techniques transmitted by his teachers. As a result, Singa Dorang faces the same challenges of survival as other *silat buhun* traditions.

Additionally, the school's strict selection process and demanding requirements have discouraged public participation, leading to the marginalization of Singa Dorang within the broader

community. Meanwhile, the spirit of modernity has transformed many aspects of social life, including public perceptions of *silat*, which is now often associated with sports and competition. This raises a critical question: can Singa Dorang continue to endure and maintain its relevance for the people of Pameungpeuk in the changing times?

Conceptual Framework

This study examines the transformation of the Singa Dorang Silat School until its renaming as Pusaka Siliwangi, drawing upon Vansina's (2014) concept that every cultural inheritance follows particular patterns and choices. Unlike Rahman's (2023) research, which explored the aspects of preservation through the lenses of exclusivity (Singa Dorang) and inclusivity (Pusaka Siliwangi), this study focuses on the Islamic spirit that, according to the researcher, forms the fundamental essence enabling the school to adapt through changing times. To clarify this perspective, the researcher first analyzes the characteristics of the Singa Dorang school from the viewpoints of its history, function, and role within society. The historical background is crucial to understanding the school's evolution and continuity. Furthermore, as a *silat* school grounded in Islamic values, this study also investigates how Singa Dorang positioned itself during periods of religious tension within the local context.

Another essential issue concerns the renaming of Singa Dorang to Pusaka Siliwangi. This research explores the reasons behind the change, its underlying motivations, and the implications for the school's identity. Did Singa Dorang maintain its *buhun* (ancient) *silat* principles, or did it experience transformation after adopting the new name? Through this investigation, the researcher aims to provide a comprehensive depiction of how a *silat* school that carries ancestral spirit strives to sustain itself and nurture a new generation amid the dynamics of modernization.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative design using an ethnographic approach supported by a literature review. The researcher describes and interprets the patterns of values, beliefs, behaviors, and language that shape the social life of the community (Creswell, 2007). Unlike traditional ethnography, which focuses primarily on sensory observation, contemporary ethnography emphasizes the importance of detailed and contextualized descriptions that encompass multiple aspects of community life (Probonegoro, 2012).

Ethnography is considered appropriate for this research because it emphasizes understanding phenomena as they naturally occur (Silverman, 2004). The purpose is to gain in-depth insight into the cultural and religious values underlying *silat* practices and present these insights descriptively through narrative analysis (Moleong, 2017). This approach aligns with the context of the study as the research object, the Pusaka Siliwangi Silat School, is an integral part of the Muslim Sundanese community in Pameungpeuk, whose traditions strongly influence the school's values and practices (Wahyuni, 2023).

The main object of study is the Pusaka Siliwangi Silat School, located in Pameungpeuk District, southern Garut Regency (see Figure 1). The school represents a continuation and transformation of the Singa Dorang *Silat* School, founded by Abah Engker Karyana (AEK). Its establishment was driven by the determination of AEK's students to preserve its *silat* legacy so that it remains relevant and accessible to the younger generation.

Pameungpeuk District

Observation was conducted to understand the cultural dynamics of the Pameungpeuk community where the Pusaka Siliwangi school is located. The researcher observed daily life patterns, cultural expressions, and community interactions. Interviews were conducted with various informants, including community leaders, cultural figures, village officials, school managers, and both senior and junior students of Pusaka Siliwangi. Structured interviews were conducted with officials and school administrators, while semi-structured and informal conversations were used with other informants. For instance, questions directed to the village head explored local government support for cultural preservation, while those addressed to community leaders examined public perceptions of *silat* in Pameungpeuk in the past and present.

Participant observation took place at the Pusaka Siliwangi training ground, located in Kang Ade's yard and a nearby community hall that also functions as an Early Childhood Education (PAUD) facility in the mornings. A particularly interesting finding was the high level of public interest in the training sessions, as many residents gathered to watch the practice. According to Kang Ade, this approach was intended to attract community attention and encourage broader engagement with Pusaka Siliwangi (see Figure 2).



The selection of interviewees followed five main criteria: (1) informants possess deep cultural knowledge, (2) have direct involvement with the research object, (3) the researcher is not yet familiar with the cultural context, (4) sufficient time is available for information gathering, and (5) informants do not analyze the data they provide (Spradley, 2023). These principles ensured that the data collection process remained valid and comprehensive.

After data collection, the researcher organized and reviewed all materials before analysis. This process aimed to ensure data clarity, prevent redundancy, and enhance the coherence and accountability of the findings presented.

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martial development: Aki Engkan from Bojong Village, Mang Engkom from Cijambe Village, and Grandmaster of the Singa Dorang School (also known as Mas'an) from Mancagahar, which is illustrated in Figure 3. Each of these teachers imparted distinct sets of movements and philosophies. AEK first mastered the stances taught by Aki Engkan, continued his training under Mang Engkom, and finally refined his techniques with Mang Eem (Rahman, 2023).

Figure 3. Grandmaster of the Singa Dorang School



Source: Irpan Ali Rahman

This sequential learning process reflected the traditional education system, where a teacher who felt their student had absorbed sufficient knowledge would recommend further study with another master³³ possessing complementary expertise. Such a pedagogical model encouraged specialization, ensuring that students⁴ deepened their knowledge and skills through diverse perspectives. Guided by humility and a commitment to his student's progress, Aki Engkan directed AEK to study with Mang Engkom, who later referred him to Mang Eem. This learning pattern enabled AEK to develop comprehensive mastery and precision in *silat* techniques. It provided him with a strong foundation that eventually established reputation as a respected master in Pameungpeuk. With this expertise, AEK founded his own *silat* school, Singa Dorang, which became a continuation of the *silat buhun* (ancient *silat*) tradition in the region.

According to AEK, as cited by Rahman (2023), the name Singa Dorang refers to a powerful ancestral figure believed to have once *tilem* in Mancagahar. The term *tilem* describes someone who once existed and then disappeared (Hardjadibrata, 2023). Rahman (2023) offers two interpretations of this term: first, it may refer to a historical figure who lived and died in Mancagahar; second, it could signify a spiritual being who appeared to AEK in a dream to provide guidance after a period of spiritual retreat. Inspired by this revelation, AEK adopted the name Singa Dorang for his school and established it with a distinctly Islamic orientation. This spiritual foundation is evident in the student admission requirements, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Basic Requirements to Enter the Singa Dorang School

No.	Requirement	Reason
1 1	Must be Muslim	The Singa Dorang School accepts only Muslim students because its mystical rituals incorporate recitations from the Qur'an.
22	Recite the two creeds of faith in every movement	Students must perform three movements: raising both hands upward, spreading the hands outward, and placing them on the waist to begin the stance. These movements are repeated while holding the breath and reciting <i>La ilaha illallah Muhammadar rasulullah</i> silently.
	Perform the five daily prayers	This rule reflects the expectation of obedience and moral integrity among students.
	Avoid immorality	Students are strictly forbidden from committing immoral acts. It is believed that anyone who does so will lose their <i>silat</i> abilities immediately. Even if hidden, such behavior is said to be known by AEK, resulting in expulsion from the school.

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

Together with his four principal students: Kang Ade (Suherman), Kang Dede, Kang Wawas, and their relative Kang Oleh, AEK successfully preserved the *silat buhun* tradition in Pameungpeuk. They upheld the same stringent

standards as their predecessors. Only individuals who demonstrated genuine commitment and trained at least four times per week were allowed to remain. Failure to meet these expectations resulted in expulsion, reflecting the school's emphasis on discipline and devotion.

AEK transmitted five core stances to his main students, all of which originated from a fundamental movement modeled on the posture of a Muslim raising both hands in *takbiratul ihram* at the beginning of prayer (see Figure 4). This initial stance symbolized the belief that every human action should begin with the glorification of Allah, the Creator (Rahman, 2023). The philosophical integration of faith and martial discipline underscores the school's unique Islamic identity.

Figure 4. Movement Symbolizing a Muslim Pronouncing the *Takbiratul Ihram* During Prayer



Source: Irpan Ali Rahman

During practice, students were required to control their breathing while performing each stance. Mastery of this ability was essential, as practitioners were expected to hold their breath for approximately fifteen minutes during demonstrations. This breathing technique aimed to enhance concentration, inner calmness, and energy accumulation, which could later be released suddenly for defensive purposes. The combination of physical endurance, spiritual devotion, and disciplined focus exemplifies how Singa Dorang harmonizes martial art with Islamic spirituality.

Another rule strictly upheld by students of Singa Dorang concerns the confidentiality of the stances they have learned. There are two primary reasons for this principle. First,

within the *buhun silat* tradition, *silat* is not intended for public display or demonstration but is reserved for self-defense in critical situations. Second, students must guard against arrogance that might arise from their martial expertise. This humility reflects the moral and spiritual foundation of the Singa Dorang school, whose movements are designed to be powerful and potentially lethal but must only be used to uphold justice and self-protection. Misuse of these techniques would violate both the ethical code of the school and the Islamic principles that guide its philosophy (Hakis et al., 2024). To minimize the potential misuse of these techniques, AEK deliberately selected remote natural environments, such as forests and the open sea, as training grounds.

Interviews with AEK's disciples, Kang Ade and Kang Oleh, reveal that Singa Dorang's training regimen was exceptionally demanding, requiring high levels of physical endurance and spiritual discipline. The stances were technically intricate and required long-term dedication to master. One particularly rigorous exercise involved swimming ten kilometers into the southern sea at midnight. At that designated point, AEK would wait for his students on a small canoe that he rowed himself. There, in the midst of crashing waves, training sessions were conducted in complete darkness, ending only when dawn approached. The students would then swim back to shore unaided, reinforcing not only physical strength but also mental resilience and obedience to their master's instructions.

Such methods reflect a broader pedagogical tradition among eminent *silat* masters. A comparable case can be found in *Belajar Silat (Learning Silat)* by Drewes (1949), a summary of Tulis Sutan Sati's novel *Sengsara Membawa Nikmat*, which recounts the training of Midun under Haji Abbas. The master imposed five demanding learning stages: (1) practicing on uneven terrain to strengthen balance; (2) training on wooden boards that must not creak; (3) moving on slippery ground without falling; (4) maintaining balance within a narrow

boundary while being pushed; and (5) practicing in total darkness to sharpen sensory awareness.

The discipline instilled by both AEK and Haji Abbas reflects a shared understanding that *silat* is a spiritual and moral weapon, one to be employed only when self-defense is unavoidable. In unavoidable confrontations, practitioners are expected to neutralize opponents through strategic entrapment, parrying, or evasion, whether with bare hands or with weapons (Asril, 2024).

Traditional *silat* schools also possess distinctive stylistic elements. For instance, *silek tuo* (old *silat*) from Minangkabau, West Sumatra, emphasizes core patterns such as the three-step, four-step, and nine-step movements. These forms inspired the development of other *silat* schools across various regions, such as Silat Lintau, Silat Pangian, Silat Kumango, Silat Sitaralak, Silat Gunuang, Silat Pariaman, and Silat Pesisir (Rustiyanti, 2023). Their philosophies generally align with three core principles.

First, the maxim “attack or be attacked, kill or be killed” (Rahman, 2023) reflects the harsh realities of historical life in Sunda and surrounding regions, where threats came from both human adversaries and wild animals. While this principle once served as psychological preparation for survival, it later contributed to the perception of Singa Dorang as a harsh or even merciless *silat* school.

Second, most of its techniques emphasize the combination of hand strength and kicking movements, used interchangeably for defense and offense. Third, many Singa Dorang stances are inspired by the movements of animals, such as bulls, monkeys, eagles, snakes, and tigers (Facal, 2016), symbolizing agility, instinct, and strength.

However, the adaptation of animal movements is not unique to Singa Dorang. Many *silat* traditions across Indonesia draw inspiration from animal behavior, as reflected in styles such as *Kelabang Liar* (Wild Centipede), *Kelabang Nyeberang* (Crossing Centipede), and *Silek Harimau* (Tiger *Silat*).

These examples illustrate the deep interconnection between humans and nature in traditional martial culture, where practitioners observed animals to learn their defense mechanisms and integrated them into spiritualized combat movements.

This tradition of transmission and discipline continues through AEK’s four principal disciples: Kang Ade (Suherman), Kang Dede, Kang Wawas, and Kang Oleh, who have preserved the authenticity and values of Singa Dorang’s teachings within their local community (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Kang Oleh, Kang Ade, Kang Dede, and Kang Wawas, the Main Disciples of AEK



From left to right: Kang Oleh, Kang Ade, Kang Dede, Kang Wawas

(Source: Irpan Ali Rahman)

The Role of the Singa Dorang School in Pameungpeuk Society

Pencak silat in West Java has generally developed by integrating physical and spiritual values, as it emphasizes not only bodily movement but also inner meaning. These two aspects are embodied in the terms *usik* (movement) and *eusi* (essence of movement) (Saefurridjal, 2025), which together form a unified concept. In *usik* resides *eusi*, as illustrated in the first stance of Singa Dorang, whose motion resembles a Muslim performing *takbiratul ihram* in prayer. More broadly, the subsequent four stances extend this initial gesture, reflecting the philosophy that every human action must begin by glorifying the name of God, as symbolized in the *takbiratul ihram*.

Another embodiment of *eusi* is the attitude of humility and restraint. As Kang Ade explained during an interview, the guiding principle of Singa Dorang is “*sigaya tapi euweuh, sigaya euweuh tapi aya*”,

meaning “like it exists, but it does not; like it does not, but it exists.” This philosophy suggests that it is acceptable for the school to remain unseen, yet it will manifest itself when the community needs it. In other words, Singa Dorang emerges to serve the public whenever its presence is required.

The school’s involvement in community life is closely linked to maintaining social security and harmony in Pameungpeuk, even during turbulent times. One instance was the controversy surrounding the recitation of the *Qunut* prayer during the *Fajr* prayer, which revealed divergent views between the Muhammadiyah and Persatuan Umat Islam (PUI) organizations. Muhammadiyah rejected *Qunut* on the grounds that the Prophet Muhammad never practiced it, while PUI permitted it due to the perceived spiritual benefit of the prayer. This theological difference eventually polarized the community into two opposing factions.

Another episode occurred during the DI/TII rebellion led by Kartosuwirjo (1949–1962). The insurgency created a volatile security situation in Pameungpeuk and its surrounding areas. Many residents, influenced by millenarian beliefs about the coming of the *Ratu Adil* (Just King), interpreted Kartosuwirjo’s proclamation of the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII) as the fulfillment of this prophecy. Consequently, when the Indonesian National Army (TNI) launched operations to suppress the rebellion, local divisions deepened between those who supported the movement and those who did not.

In an interview, Rahman recounted that AEK and Singa Dorang chose a neutral stance, refraining from taking sides in the disputes between Muhammadiyah and PUI or in the DI/TII conflict. AEK viewed these tensions as internal matters among Muslims that should be resolved through scholarly deliberation and community enlightenment. His primary concern was ensuring that *pencak silat* remained a beneficial cultural and moral practice. When asked whether Singa Dorang ever participated in combat or supported the DI/TII insurgents, AEK firmly denied it. This

response underscores the school’s guiding principle and AEK’s effort to position Singa Dorang as a force for peace amid social unrest.

Despite its strong Islamic foundation, evident in student admissions, training routines, and assessment rituals, Singa Dorang has consistently avoided entanglement in religious or political conflicts. AEK’s neutral stance was motivated by the desire to prevent further division within the community and to sustain social stability in Pameungpeuk. From the perspective of sustainability, such an approach was prudent, as the conflicts stemmed from within the same society; taking sides would only have deepened polarization and hindered reconciliation.

Rebranding as a Survival Strategy

After AEK passed away in 2022, Singa Dorang experienced a leadership vacuum that led to the suspension of its activities. This situation placed the school at a crossroads: whether to continue or to end permanently. If it were to continue, the question arose as to who would lead and manage it. On the other hand, if it were discontinued, the martial knowledge and stances taught by AEK would stop with his four senior disciples: Kang Dede, Kang Ade, Kang Wawas, and Kang Oleh, who themselves were no longer young.

Faced with this dilemma, the four senior students made a bold decision: to rename Singa Dorang as Pusaka Siliwangi. This change can be understood as an act of rebranding, a concept more familiar in business studies than in cultural contexts, but increasingly relevant as a strategy to maintain public engagement and continuity (Wheeler, 2013). The decision to replace Singa Dorang with Pusaka Siliwangi was based on several considerations.

First, the name Singa Dorang had become relatively unfamiliar to the younger generation of Pameungpeuk. Unlike figures of regional or national prominence whose names are immortalized in public spaces, Singa Dorang was not well known in collective memory. Second, the name

Siliwangi was considered capable of generating positive resonance both within the school and in the wider community. According to Nurfaidah (2023), Prabu Siliwangi, the legendary ruler of the Pajajaran Kingdom, is one of the most venerated figures in Sundanese history. His name evokes honor, wisdom, and strength, qualities that the new school hoped to embody. The addition of the word *pusaka* (heirloom) to *siliwangi* further emphasizes continuity with the glorious Sundanese past, as *pusaka* denotes a legacy or inheritance passed down through generations (KBBI, 2015).

Third, through the name Pusaka Siliwangi, the four masters: Kang Ade, Kang Dede, Kang Wawas, and Kang Oleh, seem to envision a broader and more inclusive mission for *pencak silat*. Both Singa Dorang and Prabu Siliwangi represent *buhun* (ancient) values deeply embedded in Sundanese cosmology: the former as a powerful martial lineage rooted in Pameungpeuk, and the latter as a symbol of leadership and spiritual wisdom. From this perspective, the adoption of the name Pusaka Siliwangi can be viewed as both a strategic and symbolic act, linking the school to the larger cultural identity of the Sundanese people.

Fourth, the rebranding was also motivated by the desire to shed the long-standing image of Singa Dorang as a harsh, exclusive, and brutal school. The term “harsh” referred to its physically demanding training regimen; “cruel,” to its merciless approach toward opponents; and “deadly,” to its guiding principle: “*kill or be killed*.” This reputation had created fear among parents, who worried that their children would become aggressive or inhumane if they joined. Furthermore, the members’ distinctive black attire, complete with headbands and footwear, reinforced their image as a closed and separate group within the community. Over time, this negative perception made it increasingly difficult for Singa Dorang to attract new students.

Although the decision to rebrand Singa Dorang into Pusaka Siliwangi was well-

intentioned, it did not come without cultural consequences. Traditionally, *buhun silat* schools prohibit the public display or modification of their sacred stances. However, in a focused discussion with the four masters, they explained that the core *buhun* stances of Singa Dorang would remain preserved as part of the school’s spiritual heritage. In the future, if a Pusaka Siliwangi student demonstrates physical endurance, mental discipline, and moral integrity, the original stances and rituals, such as the ten-kilometer open-sea swim once required by AEK, will be reintroduced as part of advanced training.

From this standpoint, Pusaka Siliwangi represents the more “approachable” face of Singa Dorang as it is not merely a change of name but a strategic adaptation, a way of ensuring the survival of *silat buhun* traditions within changing social realities. By presenting itself with a friendlier image, Pusaka Siliwangi has successfully attracted new students, increasing the likelihood of generational continuity. The four masters believe that when some of these students reach the age of forty, a stage symbolizing emotional maturity and self-control. They will be ready to inherit the full knowledge and spiritual essence of Singa Dorang.

Thus, the rebranding of Singa Dorang into Pusaka Siliwangi can be understood as a deliberate effort to sustain an endangered martial heritage. While it departs from certain *buhun* traditions, it simultaneously ensures that the lineage, spirit, and values of Singa Dorang continue to live on in a form that is both adaptive and faithful to its origins.

Pusaka Siliwangi

The martial art of *silat*, rooted in Malay culture, has spread not only throughout Indonesia but also to Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore. This expansion has given rise to numerous styles with distinctive characteristics, which are subsequently formalized into recognized “schools” practiced by generations of students (Suryo & Widodo, 2019). Following the rebranding, Pusaka Siliwangi has become part of this

enduring tradition, although its practice currently remains largely performance-based.

At the time of this research, sixty students were registered at Pusaka Siliwangi, most of whom were children, followed by teenagers and a smaller number of adults. Training did not occur in secluded locations but in a village-owned hall used daily for Early Childhood Education (PAUD) activities, situated approximately five hundred meters from Kang Ade's house in the heart of a densely populated village. This central location enables the community to observe training sessions and follow the progress of their children or relatives closely.

The enthusiasm of the students indicates that the rebranding effort has yielded tangible results. The masters appear to have successfully communicated their mission to the Pameungpeuk public, fostering trust and a sense of security between the school and the community. In effect, this strategy aligns with Islamic communication principles emphasizing transparency and harmonious relations (Mappaselleng, 2024).

Training in the PAUD hall often resembles a carefully structured performance, with strong interaction between participants and alignment with shared values and temporal structures, as described by Bauman (1992) and Schechner (2006). In this way, the rebranding effort also functions as a form of revitalization, restoring acceptance of *buhun* silat in Pameungpeuk society.

Through Pusaka Siliwangi, AEK's legacy continues. His advanced stances, initially passed to Kang Ade, Kang Dede, Kang Wawas, and Kang Oleh, are now poised to be transmitted to younger generations through a process of oral instruction (Rosenberg, 1987). This ensures that the spirit of Singa Dorang, as conceptualized by Vansina (1985), endures across generations. Over time, successive lineages, from AEK's teachers, to AEK himself, to his disciples, and now to the youth in Pusaka Siliwangi, have maintained a common framework or formula in their teaching (Lord, 2000), preserving continuity even as the school adopts a new identity.

The social structure of Pameungpeuk plays a crucial role in this success. The community is overwhelmingly Muslim; according to Kecamatan Pameungpeuk dalam Angka (2010), 38,471 out of 38,493 residents were Muslim. While the 2024 data do not specify religious affiliation among a total population of 92,662, the presence of 165 mosques and 82 *mushalas*, and no places of worship for other religions, demonstrates strong Islamic support (BPS, 2024). Coupled with the Islamic principles embedded in Singa Dorang and Pusaka Siliwangi, this social environment naturally facilitates acceptance of the school as both a martial and moral institution.

CLOSING

Singa Dorang is a *buhun* silat school with a strong Islamic character, yet it historically carried a negative reputation for harshness and cruelty. Its transformation into Pusaka Siliwangi represents a strategic effort by the masters to preserve *buhun* stances from extinction. This strategy has succeeded in part because the Islamic values of the Pameungpeuk community align with the spiritual and ethical foundations of the school.

The masters managing Pusaka Siliwangi: Kang Ade, Kang Dede, Kang Wawas, and Kang Oleh, recognize the importance of preserving this unique martial tradition, which is both historically and culturally significant to the Pameungpeuk community. Both Singa Dorang and Pusaka Siliwangi exemplify the community's resilience in maintaining Islamic traditions through turbulent periods. Historically, Singa Dorang has provided tangible benefits, particularly during times of political unrest or religious disputes.

The rebranding strategy demonstrates foresight and adaptability. By creating a new identity, the masters circumvented the restrictive norms of *buhun* silat, which prohibit the casual display of sacred stances, while simultaneously attracting a new generation of students. Through careful selection, the masters can assess which

students possess the discipline, moral integrity, and physical ability to inherit the secret stances of Singa Dorang. The enthusiasm observed among students at all levels, including adult learners undergoing intensive training in specialized techniques, mantras, and strict rules, suggests that the transmission of advanced martial knowledge remains effective.

Ultimately, Pusaka Siliwangi represents both a continuation and a revitalization of Singa Dorang. It preserves the sacred, martial, and spiritual legacy of *buhun silat* while adapting to contemporary social and cultural contexts, ensuring that this rich heritage endures for future generations.

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Interview

Interview with Kang Ade, 2023

Interview with Abah Engker Karyana, 2019

Interview with Kang Ade, 2023

Interview with Kang Ade and Kang Oleh, 2023