

Silat is the indigenous martial art that originates from Sumatra, then it spread across Indonesia's archipelago into Malaysia's peninsula, into Singapore, Thailand, Laos and the islands of the Philippines. Since the first recorded documents of silat in the 16th century this fighting art was rarely seen outside Southeast Asia. During the 1970s and 1980s, various styles of Silat began to emerge on Western shores. Due to the secretive nature of the art up held by the Indonesian and Malay people, unobtrusive silat schools blended into the landscape of conventional martial art clubs in places like London, Paris, Los Angeles and Amsterdam.

However this secrecy, along with an increasing lack of interest from Asia's natives, caused a rapid decline in the practice and study of the art. In today's modern Southeast Asia, you'll find more interest in premiere league football and those that are interested in martial arts, seek to learn Taekwon-do, Muay Thai or MMA.

It is sad to say some silat styles have even become extinct, but in the search to evolve a dying combat art, a new inauguration of silat formed, which became known as *'Silat Olahraga'*.

The word olahraga in Bahasa Indonesia means sport, so silat sport became a necessity to help preserve and keep the fighting system alive. More than 800 combat styles of silat exist across 13,000 islands in Indonesia. So the government establishment was formed, Ikatan Pencak Silat Indonesia (Indonesian Pencak Silat Association), known in short as IPSI.

This organization brought together the various streams of martial arts throughout Indonesia. On May 18th, 1948 in the capital of Jakarta, IPSI was launched making it the oldest national martial arts organization in the world. The main program in addition to uniting silat styles under one umbrella name Pencak Silat was also to include Pencak Silat lessons in schools to help raise awareness and interest within the art.

Pencak Silat is a compound name consisting of two terms used in different regions. The word *"pencak"*
and its dialectic derivatives such as
"penca"
from West Java and
"mancak"
from Madura and Bali. The term silat is believed to have come from the word
"silek"
which is a term used in Sumatra for fighting arts. The word pencak is described as the fluid movement or performance aspects of the martial art, while silat is the essence of fighting and
bela diri
(self-defence).

It wasn't until 1973 when representatives from different combat schools and styles finally agreed to the use *'pencak silat'* as the official term for Indonesian martial arts, although the original terms in the *kampung* (villages) are still widely used.



There are many different forms and techniques in silat but most systems concentrate on strikes, joint manipulation, body mechanics and bladed weaponry.

With any formulation of structure comes great change and some silat styles adapted their systems to meet the rules and regulations of IPSI. Unfortunately by adapting to the directive of IPSI, certain components of silat that were evolved over decades were lost. Most IPSI Pencak Silat clubs all look the same within their movement, despite being noted as different styles of silat. There were many ancient silat styles from mountain and jungle tribes that never joined IPSI and they have managed to keep their silat in its natural state, passing it down traditionally by word of mouth from guru to student. These systems of silat have preserved the heritage and cultural customs alive while keeping the art in its raw combative state. The Minangkabau Silek Harimau system from West Sumatra has manage to retain its brutal jungle warfare approach to combat. The Minangkabau tribe has kept the training of their students underground, recruiting only the worthy, strong and disciplined. The silat style of Cimande named after its village is located just a few hours away from IPSI head quarters in Jakarta, but the Cimande community has remained closed to IPSI. The *penca* group in Cimande has so far declined all invitations to take part in any events organized by IPSI. The Harimau Bernatai Silat clan is another style that has not entertained performing or uniting with IPSI.

Pencak Silat instructors had already started to teach outside their family and villages by the mid-1970s and some gurus had taught foreigners or set up a silat school across seas, but silat still remained an endangered entity.

In 1975 the South East Asian Peninsula or SEAP Federation considered the inclusion of Pencak Silat into the 8th SEAP games, but it wasn't until 1979 when the Pencak Silat would make its debut at the 14th SEA Games in Jakarta, Indonesia. The SEAP Federation, now re-branded as SEA (South East Asian) Games, had the introduction of Olahraga Pencak Silat headed by IPSI. In their first year Pencak Silat was displayed as its independent styles, with demonstration routines showcasing techniques and jurus. Then in 1980 at the SEA Games held in Singapore, Olahraga Pencak Silat took part as in competition. The rules of this silat sport had already been organized in 1973, techniques were added to Pencak Silat systems based on Karate, Kempo and Jujitsu that were already established events at the SEA Games.

