

## ***Continuity and Change of Silat Pelintau as a Cultural Heritage of the Tamiang Community in Aceh Tamiang Regency***

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**Abstract** Silat Pelintau is a traditional art of the Tamiang Malay ethnic community which originates from local wisdom and then became a performing art and underwent changes in function and use. Specifically, this research aims to determine the exact continuity and changes of Silat Pelintau in the Tamiang Malay community over several periods in Aceh Tamiang Regency. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. The continuity and changes of silat pelintau in the Tamiang Malay Ethnic community have connected periods within a certain period of time up to the present. The continuity of Silat Pelintau itself starts from colonialism, independence, the New Order, and up to the present.

**Keywords:** *Continuity, Change, Silat Pelintau, Cultural Heritage and Malay Tamiang*

**Abstrak** Silat pelintau merupakan kesenian tradisi masyarakat etnis Melayu Tamiang yang berasal dari kearifan lokal dan kemudian menjadi sebuah seni pertunjukkan serta mengalami perubahan pada fungsi dan kegunaan. Secara khusus penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui secara pasti keberlanjutan dan perubahan silat Pelintau dalam masyarakat Melayu Tamiang pada beberapa kurun periode di Kabupaten Aceh Tamiang. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Penelitian ini nantinya berusaha mendeskripsikan dan menginterpretasikan apa yang ada (bisa mengenai kondisi dan hubungan yang ada, pendapat yang sedang tumbuh, proses yang sedang berlangsung, akibat atau efek yang terjadi, atau kecenderungan yang tengah berkembang). Dan Data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah data primer dan data sekunder. Hasil Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Kontinuitas dan perubahan silat pelintau dalam masyarakat Etnis Melayu Tamiang telah menghubungkan periode – periode dalam kurun waktu tertentu sampai dengan masa sekarang. Kontinuitas silat pelintau sendiri dimulai dari masa kolonialisme, kemerdekaan, orde baru, dan sampai dengan masa sekarang.

**Kata kunci :** *Kontinuitas, Perubahan, Silat Pelintau, Warisan Budaya dan Melayu Tamiang*



## INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage is a part of cultural heritage that has important value in terms of history, science, technology and/or art. This heritage is shared by the community, and experiences development from generation to generation in a tradition born of local wisdom. Local wisdom is also an expression of a way of life developed by an ethnic community and passed down from generation to generation. Apart from that, local wisdom is a heritage that represents a system of values, beliefs, traditions, lifestyle and traces of a culture that has been continuously passed down from the past to the present.

Pelintau silat is one of the local wisdoms of the Tamiang Malay ethnic community which is the cultural heritage of the Tamiang Malay community in Aceh Tamiang Regency which still survives to this day through a long process. This can be seen from the history of Silat Pelintau, whose existence began from the colonial era until now. The Ministry of Education and Culture has also designated Silat Pelintau as one of the national cultural heritages with registration number 201900823 in 2019.

The Tamiang Malay community is an indigenous population that lives in Aceh Tamiang district, which is one of the 22 other districts in Aceh province. Geographically, Aceh Tamiang borders the Malacca Strait in the north, Langkat in the south, Malacca Strait in the west, and Mount Segama (Mount Bendahara/Wilhelmina Gebergte) in the east. Even though Aceh Tamiang is part of the province of Aceh, the customs and culture and the language of the Tamiang tribe look very different from the tribes in other Aceh provinces, especially if you look at their daily language. The customs and culture of the Tamiang ethnic group have more in common with the Deli, Siak, Kalimantan and Malaysian Malay tribes. If you look at existing historical records, this is very natural, related to events that occurred in the past.

The uniqueness and specificity of the local wisdom of the Tamiang Malay ethnic group in the order of life from birth to death can be seen from the order of life from birth to death, such as traditional ceremonies that have been carried out from generation to generation, namely traditional ceremonies of marriage, birth and death, special rituals, religious ceremonies, social systems and organizations, knowledge systems, language, arts, livelihood systems, technology systems and equipment.

The cultural heritage of the Tamiang Malay community which is the main focus in this research is Silat Pelintau. Pelintau silat comes from two syllables, namely "Pelin" and "tau" which means "all know". Silat Pelintau itself reflects the Tamiang ethnic community in seeing and studying nature and the environment, which is reflected in the movements or moves created and used to this day. Pelintau silat has specific patterns and styles like other types of pencak silat.

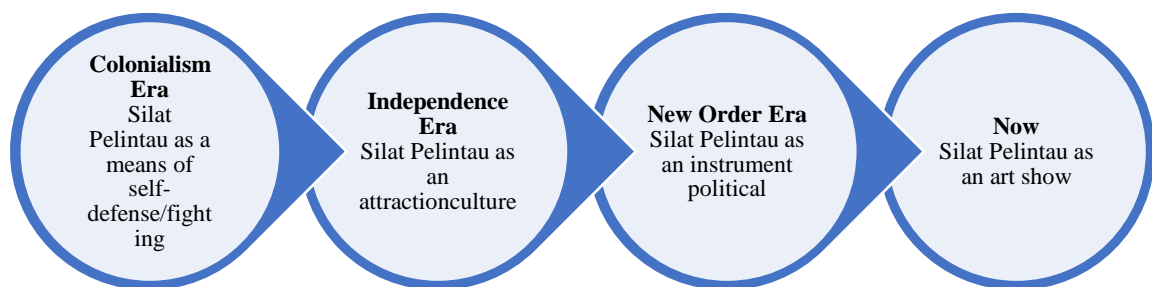
In the beginning, the movements or moves of the Pelintau silat were only used as self-defense which the warrior would use when receiving an attack, be it an attack from a wild animal

or from an enemy. Pelintau silat was also initially not accompanied by musical instruments or instruments but started with dhikr from beginning to end. In other words, in the past, Silat Pelintau was only used as individual self-defense and not as a martial art used as a performing art as is the case today.

During colonialism in 1937, Silat Pelintau was taught secretly in the forest so that the invaders would not know, this happened because it was considered that Silat Pelintau was a way to build strength to fight the invaders. Because at that time the Dutch colonialists were based in Tamiang and prohibited all forms of youth gatherings, especially teaching pencak silat which is also a martial art. After Indonesian independence was achieved, starting in 1953, Supreme Master OK Said bin Unus openly founded the Pelintau Silat community and began to openly teach local children and youth, which had the function of preparing to protect themselves if they received an unexpected attack from outside group.

In 1958, there was a change in the function of silat pelintau, which was originally a type of martial arts by the Tamiang Malay ethnic group, becoming a performing art, which began to be displayed at cultural events. These changes occurred during the first Aceh Cultural Week (PKA-D). Silat Pelintau was the first to experience transformation into a performing art and became the opening attraction displayed in front of Ir. Soekarno as the first President of the Republic of Indonesia in Banda Aceh, precisely in Syah Kuala.

Furthermore, during the New Order era, pencak silat in Aceh Tamiang was very developed, even in every region or village there had to be martial arts whose aim was to protect the village. People who have strong and tough martial arts skills join the Golkar party. At that time, pencak silat was highly encouraged by the government because it could defend the country and if the government needed it, they were recruited by the government to be appointed as government intelligence officers and the public supported it because they could defend the country. In general, the process of continuity and change can be seen in the picture 1.



Picture 1. Timeline of Silat Pelintau from Colonialism Era to Now

From the picture above, we can illustrate the continuity and changes of the Pelintau silat from colonialism, independence, the New Order and the present. What factors caused the change, why did the change occur, when did the change begin, who initiated the change and how did Silat Pelintau experience continuity and change itself, the shift in function and form of presentation from the accompaniment of musical instruments and movements that had sacred value to become profane. This is what became the author's interest in conducting the research above.

Theoretically, continuity requires cultural behavior and internalization of development, in terms of culture, the aspect of continuity is about how to make it happen. Therefore, it is necessary to be serious about cultural behavior and internalization of development. Continuity implies preservation and regeneration. In its realization, the impact of development that must be carried out brings about psychological changes in what occurs. Thus, it is hoped that the concept of continuity and development in the problem here can change the following structure and function (Widya and Dudung in Herdijat: 2012).

The changes in the traditional art of Pelintau silat in the Tamiang Malay culture are related to Randall and Stzompka's concept of change, namely the existence of different forms of performance used in the same social system at different times. Changes occur because there is contact between the original culture and foreign cultures that enter the original cultural area. There are agents of change who bring changes to the original arts of the area. Cultural contact occurs due to war, trade activities, tourism, religion spread, inter-ethnic marriages, and schools. Margareth Kartomi said there were three processes in which this change occurred.

From the history of Pelintau silat, which the author explained previously, several changes occurred due to syncretism and transculturation. Pelintau silat has changed function and use. Pelintau silat was previously used as a type of self-defense and started with dhikr and deepening the knowledge of Sufism. After Indonesian independence, Pelintau silat changed its function as a cultural attraction and was presented to Melayu Tamiang patam-patam tempo music accompaniment.

In line with previous research conducted by Farsia Dahni (2021) entitled Presentation of Silat Pelintau Music at the Wedding Ceremony of the Tamiang Ethnic Community. In his research, he showed that the function and meaning of Pelintau silat music at Tamiang ethnic wedding ceremonies function as an aesthetic pleasure that the creator and the audience, entertainment for the community, communication, and physical response can enjoy. Contribution to the preservation and stability of culture and the meaning contained in Silat Pelintau music is a cultural value or intellectual, cultural heritage that is found at a fast tempo when played by musicians as a sign of a person's alertness in facing his opponent which the warriors can then exemplify to the groom at the wedding ceremony of Tamiang ethnicity. In this research, one of the cultural heritages, especially intangible cultural heritage, that wants to be researched in the

study of continuity and change is silat pelintau. Silat Pelintau itself is a traditional art of the Tamiang Malay ethnic community which originates from local wisdom and later became a performing art.

Silat Pelintau according to Mohd Nurdin (58: 1975) is an art consisting of a combination of several arts in the skill of playing sharp weapons which are martial arts movements (knives, daggers, kelewang/swords and javelins) which have a specific style and originate from the former Tamiang kewedan. As a result of interviews with sources, Arsyad stated that Silat Pelintau was inaugurated in 1953 by Supreme Master OK Said bin Unus, who was a native son of Tamiang.

Cultural heritage, according to Davidson (1991: 2), is defined as a product or result of physical culture from different traditions and spiritual achievements in the form of values from the past which are the main elements in the identity of a group or nation. From this idea, cultural heritage is the result of physical culture (tangible) and the result of non-physical culture (intangible) from the past. Galla states that intangible culture comes from local culture which includes traditions, folklore and legends, mother tongue, oral history, creativity (dance, song and drama performances), adaptability, and the uniqueness of local communities (Galla, 2001: 12).

## **METHOD**

The research used in this research is descriptive research. This research will later try to describe and interpret what exists (it can be about existing conditions and relationships, opinions that are growing, processes that are ongoing, consequences or effects that are occurring, or trends that are developing. This research studies problems in society, as well as procedures that apply in society and certain situations, including relationships, activities, attitudes, views, as well as ongoing processes and the influences of a phenomenon.

The time perspective covered in descriptive research is the current time, or at least the time period that is still within reach in the respondent's memory. Then in this research the researcher will truly become a part and take part in the situation being observed. This involves intensive data collection, namely collecting data on many variables over a long period of time, in the situation as it is.

Furthermore, this research uses descriptive data collection methods by means of ethnographic observation. Every research always starts from a problem to be researched. In qualitative research it is still temporary, tentative, and will develop or change after the researcher is in the research field. In this research, we will investigate the Tamiang Malay ethnic community and all the cultures within it by examining human, interpersonal, social and cultural aspects in all their complexity. Furthermore, in this research a report will be prepared in detail about the social and cultural life of the Tamiang Malay community which integrates several qualitative methods.

In this research, primary data was obtained from interviews with sources who were one of the Pelintau silat masters who were also a generation of Pelintau silat masters, then added with other sources such as the Aceh traditional council (MAA), the Tamiang cultural customary council (MABMETA), researcher at the Agency for the Advancement of Culture (BPK) region I Aceh Province, cultural figure, community leader and Tamiang traditional leader. Meanwhile, secondary data in this research will be taken from documents, observations, photos, videos, data and relevant previous research.

In this research method, data is collected using several qualitative data collection techniques, namely; 1). interview, 2). observation, 3). documentation, 4). focused discussion (Focus Group Discussion), 5) cross-checking, 6) daily notes and data triangulation.

This research was carried out systematically, namely: 1) literature study to look for data about the Tamiang Malay ethnicity, the history of the emergence and sustainability of silat in Indonesia, especially in Aceh; 2) Next, identify the problem that will be the focus of the research and determine the supporting theories needed; 3) then data collection in the research field involving successors from the Pelintau silat association, the Aceh Tamiang Traditional Council, the Tamiang Traditional Cultural Council, and the Aceh Tamiang Education and Culture Service; 4) data analysis; 5) laboratory work; 6) data processing; 7) focus group discussion; 8) prepare reports; 9) as well as results seminars.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The period before colonialism, where Silat Pelintau was a form of self-defense from attacks by wild animals and as a form of self-resilience in defending territory (integrity) and did not yet have an identity as Silat Pelintau. During the era of the Indonesian kingdom, the development of pencak silat emerged as a martial art aimed to defend power and territory. The basic forms of movement that become the moves in Pelintau silat are reflections obtained in imitation/imitation of the movements of the wild animal itself when carrying out an attack.

During the Dutch colonization, the growth of silat pelintau was strongly opposed by the Dutch because it was considered dangerous for the continuity of their territorial power. So at that time silat was taught and performed secretly in the forest to avoid Dutch supervision. This concern was very reasonable, because almost all the heroes who fought the invaders at that time were martial arts warriors who could resist and fight to reclaim the colonial territories or regions. During the Japanese colonial era, silat was freed to be studied and developed, but it turns out there was a hidden motive behind the freedom to develop silat during that period which turned out to be used for Japan's interests to face the allies.

During the independence period, Silat Pelintau grew rapidly, this was because there was no colonialism in Indonesia. The martial arts skills of silat, which were used against colonialists in a guerilla manner in the era before independence, were consistently maintained by the founders of the silat school. Pencak silat universities at that time were busy galvanizing the army and the people, besides that, Islamic boarding schools and places of worship, apart from being for worship, were also used for practicing pencak silat martial arts.

Furthermore, in 1948-1949 after independence, there was an upheaval spearheaded by Kartosuwiryo, namely the Darul Islam/Indonesian Islamic Army (DI/TII) Rebellion, an ideological rebellion that wanted to change the basis of the country as an Islamic state. During the DI/TII rebellion, many Pelintau silat warriors from academic schools who defected to the government were forcibly arrested because they were suspected of joining the rebellion (interview with the head of the Tamiang Aceh traditional council, Juned). However, from different schools, Pelintau silat warriors joined the government to fight the DI/TII rebellion, which the government finally succeeded in resolving with military operations in 1962.

Furthermore, in 1957 silat pelintau underwent its first significant change where initially silat pelintau was only used as a self-defense tool and for integrity and maintaining regional resilience, but in that year silat pelintau changed its function and form to become a performing art which was presented for the first time in front of President of the Republic of Indonesia Ir Soekarno at the opening of the first Acehnese cultural week in the city of Banda Aceh.

Then during the New Order era (1966), Silat Pelintau was increasingly actively presented as a performing art in several events both in society and government activities. During this period, the movement of the Silat Pelintau association was actively monitored by the government. This is because at that time the government launched a state defense program by preparing people in each village to be able to defend themselves which would later be used to strengthen the state if at any time the state needed it.

Silat Pelintau continues to be sustainable until today, where Silat Pelintau has changed its function as a performing art that has commodification value. Pelintau silat can easily be found during events welcoming regional grand guests, welcoming brides, apostle circumcisions and children's descents in Aceh Tamiang district. Silat Pelintau itself has become a national cultural heritage which was proposed by the Tamiang Aceh district government which was then ratified through a decree of the Minister of Education and Culture as a form of identity of the intangible cultural heritage of the Tamiang Malay ethnic community.

## **CONCLUSION**

The continuity and changes of silat pelintau in the Tamiang Malay Ethnic community have connected periods within a certain period of time up to the present. The continuity of Silat

Pelintau itself starts from colonialism, independence, the New Order, and up to the present. The continuity of Silat Pelintau is closely aligned with the cultural behavior of the Tamiang Malay ethnic community where internal parties are trying to develop Silat Pelintau itself, in a form and presentation that is significantly more visible.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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