

PRACTICES OF SELF DEFENCE MARTIAL ART FROM  
SHARĪAH PERSPECTIVE: A CASE STUDY OF  
*PERSATUAN SENI SILAT CEKAK MALAYSIA* IN  
GOMBAK

BY

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## ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the existence of *Silat* has brought many misconceptions among the Malay society. Some Malays believe that *Silat* practitioners do not possess pleasing personality and regularly get involved in superstitious practices and deviant beliefs. This research aims to study the definition of *Silat* and *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* and discover the position of *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* within the principles of *Sharī'ah*. Besides, this study will analyse the etiquettes, values and discipline of *Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* practices to find out the extent of its conformity with the *Sharī'ah* principles and investigate the learning process of *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* in various training classes within Gombak, Selangor to find out whether it is in line with the principles of *Sharī'ah* or vice versa. A qualitative case study was conducted to explore the extent of conformity of its etiquettes, values and discipline in *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* with compliance to *Maqāṣid Sharī'ah*. The research methods utilised were library research, observation and interview. A total of 12 samples from four different *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* training classes will have to respond to the interview questions provided and conducted by the researcher. The findings concluded that *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia*, through its central concepts, complied with the *Sharī'ah* principles. It is agreed that the etiquettes, values and discipline in *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia*, regardless of any aspects it is implemented and practised, is following the *Sharī'ah* principles. Therefore, this study indicates that *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* is a Malay martial art that can be learnt and preserved by the young generation as a legacy for future generations. This study is limited to practitioners actively involved in *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* under *Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM)* by focusing on Gombak, Selangor.

## خلاصة البحث

في أيامنا هذه، جلب وجود سيلات (*Silat*) الكثير من المفاهيم الخاطئة بين المجتمع الماليزي. بعض الملايو يعتقدون أن ممارسي سيلات لا يمتلكون شخصية جيدة وينخرطون بانتظام في الممارسات الخرافية والمعتقدات المنحرفة. تتمثل أهداف هذا البحث في دراسة تعريف سيلات وسني سيلات جكق مليسيا (*Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia*) واكتشاف موقف سني سيلات جكق مليسيا في إطار مبادئ الشريعة. وإلى جانب ذلك، قامت الدراسة أيضاً بتحليل مدونة أخلاقيات سني سيلات جكق مليسيا لمعرفة مدى مطابقتها مع الشريعة الإسلامية. وأيضاً للتحقيق في عملية تعلّم سني سيلات جكق مليسيا في مختلف فصول معرفة ما إذا كان سني سيلات جكق مليسيا يتماشى مع مبادئ الشريعة أو العكس. أجريت دراسة حالة نوعية لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة. هذه الطريقة البحثية تستخدم الدراسة المكتبية والملاحظة والمقابلة. الباحثة ستستعين من ١٢ عينة من أربع فصول التدريبية مثل الفصول التدريبية في غومباك (*Gombak*) في إجابة على أسئلة المقابلة التي ستقدم وستجري المقابلة الباحثة. خلصت النتائج إلى أن سني سيلات جكق مليسيا، من خلال مفاهيمها الرئيسية تلتزم بالشريعة. من المتفق عليه أن جميع قواعد السلوك في سني سيلات جكق مليسيا، بصرف النظر عن أي جوانب يتم تنفيذها وممارستها وفقاً للشريعة. ولذلك، تشير هذه الدراسة إلى أن سني سيلات جكق مليسيا هو فن عسكري الذي يجوز للشباب تعلّمه والحفاظ عليه من أجل الميراث للأجيال القادمة. تقتصر هذه الدراسة على الممارسين، الذين يشاركون بنشاط في سني سيلات جكق مليسيا بولاية غومباك، سلانجور فقط.

## **APPROVAL PAGE**

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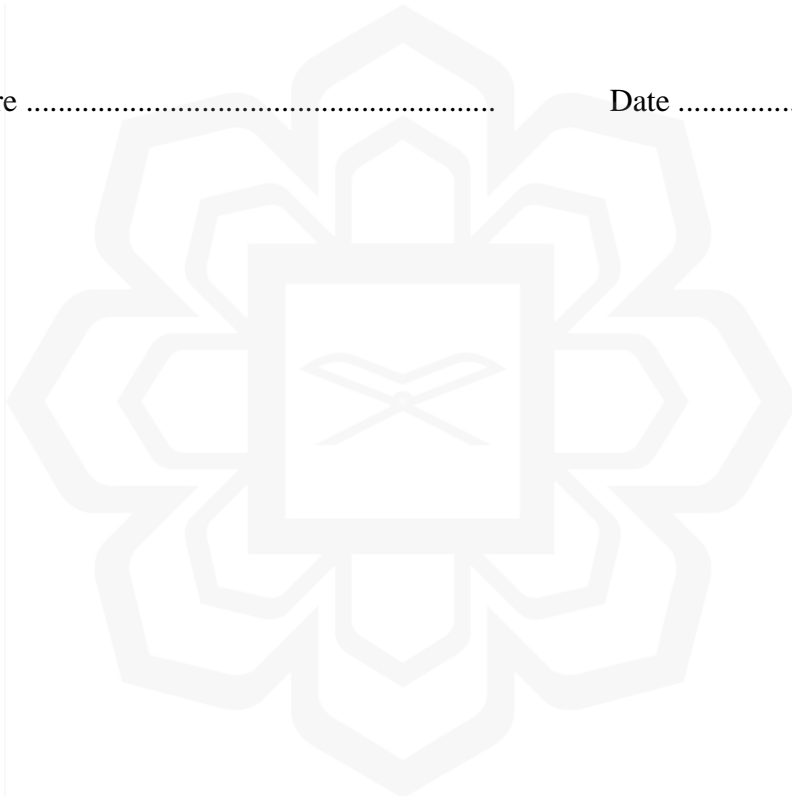
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## DECLARATION

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Malaysia is a nation state that consists of unique and multi-racial traditions, where each racial group were given freedom to practice their traditions and norms under the federal constitution. The largest population in Malaysia is from the Malay racial group, and this group possesses rich traditional customs that cover all aspects of life and are deeply rooted from Islamic teachings. This includes the practice of self-defence and martial arts, also known as '*Silat*'. The origin of *Silat* can be traced back to the early period of Malay civilisation, and nowadays, *Silat* is practically being applied in various levels of society which had become an important element in preserving the tradition and played significant role in the Malay culture.

In the history of the Malays, *Silat* acts as a significant cultural tool taught and practiced by Malay scholars in spreading Islam in the Malay Archipelago. According to Abdul Majid B. Ismail, the spread of Islam in Java islands by the *Wali Songo* (Nine Saints) incorporated the elements of culture and tradition particularly *Silat* to attract public interest towards Islam.<sup>1</sup> While in the Malay Peninsula, the spread of Islam was greatly influenced by Muslim scholars who were also *Silat* practitioners such as Syeikh Daud Al Fatani, Syeikh Muhammad Arsyad Bin 'Abdullah Al Banjari, Pak Ngah Syarif, Syed Saggaf Syed Abdul Rahman Paloh, and Syeikh Salleh Abdul

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<sup>1</sup> Abdul Majid B. Ismail, *Seni Silat sebagai Budaya Bangsa dan Peranannya dalam Membentuk Jati Diri Bangsa Melayu*, Paper presented at *Seminar Ulama Berjiwa Panglima Sebagai Pendokong Jati Diri Bangsa Melayu*, organized by *Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM)*, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Gombak, Selangor in 21 December 2003, 11.

Rahman Limbung.<sup>2</sup> *Silat* element was inherent in the Malay scholars aforementioned that they wanted to preserve this tradition from one generation to another in order to embed it as a cultural and national identity. It does not solely act as a tool to defend one self and the country from foreign invasions and colonial powers but *Silat* also can be benefited as a cultural tool in developing and moulding the young generations of a nation.

Nowadays, this tradition remains not only as a mean of self-defence but with a wider scope and involvement in societal activities and an increased contribution towards welfare activities. *Silat* associations in Malaysia had been developed into a Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) body registered under *Persekutuan Silat Kebangsaan Malaysia (PESAKA)*.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of structuring this body is to unite all *Silat* associations under one body at national level, and the structural establishment under *PESAKA* is also to assist the younger generations in preserving the *Silat* from various 'deviant' western influences and to preserve one of the Malay cultural aspects. For the Malay nations, they are widely respected as a *Muslim* nation expert in *Silat*, and until recent days, this unique heritage has continuously been inherited by the Malays from various levels of background. The origin of *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* as a Malay *Silat* is closely related to the Malay culture and tradition, where it has been practiced and applied by the *panglima* (governor-general) of Kedah Sultanate during

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<sup>2</sup> Abdul Majid B. Ismail, *Seni Silat sebagai Budaya Bangsa dan Peranannya dalam Membentuk Jati Diri Bangsa Melayu*, Paper presented at *Seminar Ulama Berjiwa Panglima Sebagai Pendukung Jati Diri Bangsa Melayu*, organized by *Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM)*, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Gombak, Selangor in 21 December 2003, 11.

<sup>3</sup> The formation of *Persekutuan Silat Kebangsaan Malaysia (PESAKA)* was initiated during a meeting at Sultan Sulaiman Club, Kampung Baru, Kuala Lumpur on 1 March 1975. The meeting was attended by gurus from four major *Silat* association in Malaysia namely *Seni Silat Lincah Malaysia*, *Silat Seni Gayong Malaysia*, *Seni Gayung Fatani Malaysia*, *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* and sixteen PESAKA state representatives. Previously, PESAKA was known as *Majlis Silat Negara*. It was officially registered on 24 September 1983.

the era of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin II.<sup>4</sup> According to *PSSCM, Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* was practiced by Panglima Ismail and Panglima Tok Rashid.<sup>5</sup> Both *panglima* were high-ranked military officers during Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin II, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Sultan of Kedah reigned from 1854 until 1879.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* has its own significant quality in Malay civilisation.

In addition, Shukri argues that during the sultanate era of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin II, *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* was practiced by military personnel namely Panglima Ismail and Panglima Tok Rashid to defend the state from enemy.<sup>7</sup> Besides its purpose to defend the state, *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* also possessed significant skills and knowledge on building its practitioner's self and character based on Islamic principles, that it consequently allows its practitioners to possess good attitude and increase their faith in God.<sup>8</sup>

The objectives of *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* remains unchanged until today; that it focuses on developing its learners not only to defend themselves, but also their religion as well as their country from any threats, and also developing good personality and producing beneficial societal members. That is why this study to evaluate *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* from *Sharī'ah* perspective is important nowadays.

Meanwhile, Islam also encouraged all Muslims to make their best preparation for their strength; which includes political authority, economical sector, self-defence,

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<sup>4</sup> PSSCM Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), "Perjuangan", *Majalah Panglima Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia Universiti Sains Malaysia*, 1998, 68-72.

<sup>5</sup> PSSCM, *Bapa Pembangunan Silat Melayu Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia YM Datuk Haji Maideen bin Kadir Shah*, (Kuala Lumpur: PSSCM, 2019), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Bahagian Komunikasi Koprak Kerajaan Negeri Kedah, "Salasilah DYMM Sultan Kedah (Dari 1136M)," Portal Rasmi Kerajaan Negeri Kedah, <<https://www.kedah.gov.my/kesultanan-kedah/istiadat-pertabalan-kdymm-tuanku-sultan/salasilah-dymm-sultan-kedah-dari-1136m>> (accessed 9 September 2019).

<sup>7</sup> Shukri bin Janudin. (2019, Mei). Membudayakan Penyelidikan Sejarah Silat Cekak: Warisan Bersanad, Budaya Bernasab. Keynote address at Kolokium *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* (KoSSCeM'19) organized by *Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* Universiti Sains Malaysia Kampus Kejuruteraan, Pulau Pinang.

<sup>8</sup> PSSCM, *Bapa Pembangunan Silat Melayu Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia YM Datuk Haji Maideen bin Kadir Shah*, (Kuala Lumpur: PSSCM, 2019), 10

society and national stability in facing the evils from the enemy. This is parallel to the command of Allāh in Sūrah Al-Anfāl, verse 60:

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مِمَّا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ  
عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَعَآخِرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ  
يَعْلَمُهُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا  
تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾<sup>9</sup>

Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies, of God and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom God doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of God, shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly<sup>10</sup>

This verse highlights the obligation to make their best preparation onto Muslims in every situation that they are currently in and will face in the future, including women and men. Therefore, the basis of this verse will be taken as reference in this paper for completing this research in the context of the importance in learning self-defence art.

In addition, *Silat* will be the priority concern that will be taken as a sample in this research. The discussion in this research will be focused on its practices of etiquettes, values and discipline in the learning process of *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* and its permissibility in *Sharī'ah* principles. In regard to this matter, several points of views and justifications have been analysed by referring to the research questions and objectives of the study. Hence, this study will contribute in closing literature gaps from previous studies and publications.

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<sup>9</sup> Al-Qurān, Al-Anfāl: 60.

<sup>10</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran Original Text with Translation & Selected Commentaries*, (Kuala Lumpur: Saba Islamic Media, 2001), 220.

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Nowadays, the existence of *Silat* has brought multiple misconceptions among the Malay society. Some of the Malays believe that *Silat* practitioners do not possess a good character and regularly get involved in superstitious practices and deviant beliefs. The perceptions that had existed among the Malays in stereotyping all *Silat* as similar create negative impact on the Malay society at large when they are participating in the *Silat* activity. Although there are some of the *Silat* involved in those particular problems, it is not ethically accurate to generalize them to all the *Silat*. In addition, *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* claims that they are eluded from superstitious practices and deviant belief. Therefore, this research will evaluate and study this *Silat* and its etiquettes, values and discipline. This study will also identify the problem whether this *Silat* is in-line with the *Sharī'ah* principles or vice versa. This study will be conducted in Gombak area as there are varieties of *Silat Cekak Malaysia* classes in various places such as schools, universities and public classes compared to the other areas. The learning system and syllabus in every class is different according to the level of education. For example, the approach in learning system at school differ with the universities and public classes as the background of religion knowledge and understanding of each practitioner is different. Despite the differences, this research will analyze either the learning process in each class is in line with the principles of *Sharī'ah*. In addition, the etiquettes, values and discipline in *Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM)* will also be analysed whether the practices are in-line with the *Sharī'ah* principles or vice versa.

## 1.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study investigates the following fundamental research questions:

- 1- What is the definition of *Silat* and what does the *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* stand for?
- 2- What is the position of *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* within the principles of *Sharī'ah*?
- 3- What is the extent of conformity of the etiquettes, values and discipline of *Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM)* practices with the *Sharī'ah* principles?
- 4- Is the learning process of *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* in various training classes within Gombak, Selangor in line with the principles of *Sharī'ah*?

#### **1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this research are:

- 1- To study the definition of *Silat* and *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia*.
- 2- To discover the position of *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* within the principles of *Sharī'ah*.
- 3- To analyse the etiquettes, values and discipline of *Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM)* practices to find out the extent of its conformity with the *Sharī'ah* principles.
- 4- To investigate the learning process of *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* in various training classes within Gombak, Selangor to find out whether it is in line with the principles of *Sharī'ah* or vice versa.

#### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study will provide information about *Silat* which is almost being extinct among the Malay younger generations. Meanwhile, this research will also highlight that *Silat*

also possess its own quality of education especially the *Silat* that were developed from the basis of Islamic teaching. This occurs because they were mostly exposed to foreign martial arts such as karate, taekwondo and aikido instead of preserving their own cultural heritage. Therefore, this study will indicate that *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* is a Malay martial art that can be learnt and preserved by the young generation as a legacy for future generations.

In addition, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge or to the academic literature as follows:

- 1- This is the first research to investigate about *Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM)* whether this *Silat* is aligned with *Sharī'ah* principles, particularly in Gombak, Selangor, Malaysia, or vice versa.
- 2- This study will become the first academic research that deals with one of the Malay cultural elements that had existed for a long time and its position within the *Sharī'ah* principles.
- 3- It is expected that *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* does not only focus on *Silat* but also focuses on relationship between its members in getting along to develop and maintain the harmonious state of the Malay society.

## **1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The scope and limitations of the study are as follows:

- 1- This study is limited to practitioners, who are actively involved in *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia*. Some of the practitioners consisting of professionals, academicians and public will be interviewed to discover the information on *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia*. Besides that, some instructors will be interviewed to gather data regarding this study. In addition, to gather more reliable

findings for this study, some instructors and executive committee from each training classes will also be cross-examined.

- 2- This study limits the investigation by focusing only in Gombak, Selangor, Malaysia. This district will include training classes from schools, cities as well as universities, and there are around 100 *Silat* organizations in Malaysia registered under *PESAKA* organization and the *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* exists in IIUM itself.
- 3- The time limit of this study is from the year 2010 until present.

## **1.7 METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

### **1.7.1 Research Design**

The study used several methods in gathering the data related to the topic. These particular methods are:

#### **Qualitative:**

This research method by uses library research, observation and interview as follows,

- 1- Library research consists of several methods which are:
  - a. Descriptive methods will be used in describing the meaning of *Silat*, *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia* and all the information about this *Silat* including the etiquettes, values and discipline in *Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia*. This method will be used to describe the first, second and third research questions of this study.
  - b. Analytical method will be used to analyse the views and interpretations of scholars about *Silat* and to know the compatibility of the etiquettes, values and discipline of this *Silat* according to the *Sharī'ah* perspective.