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Force against force : configurations of martial art in European and Indonesian cultures

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Indonezyjskie sztuki walki nie były dotąd w Polsce opisane i zinterpretowane od strony naukowej, jeśli nie liczyć popularnej książki Szymankiewiczza wzorowanej na pracach Chambersa i Draegera¹. Z tym większym zainteresowaniem publikujemy za zgodą Autora – specjalisty w tej dziedzinie, historyka i antropologa kulturowego – przedruk jego artykułu².

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Abstract

Sociology of non-European sport cultures is faced by exceptional methodological difficulties. Social sciences (above all quantifying ones) of the western type cannot cope with it, since it is a question here of complex alien structures and one cannot count on universal aspects of the basic categories.

That is why a different interdisciplinary approach is needed in the case of Indonesian art of fight "pencak silat", which would continue with an analysis of configurations of the anthropology of culture (Ruth Benedict) of the sociology of civilization (Norbert Elias) and historical structuralism (Michel Foucault). In this way one gets an idea about the art of fighting that is typical of Indonesian peoples and which is in clear contrast to the historical development of European fencing and boxing. The different exercise patterns reveal most clearly the completely different traditions and ways of socio-cultural development.

It should not be permitted to reduce such complexity to a one-dimensional direction in historical development, in the light of which Indonesian forms may appear as "archaic" or "mediaeval". The more so since we live in times when there exists fascination with Asiatic forms of physical culture (Karate, Aikido, Taekwon-Do, Tai Chi Chuan, Yoga), which is growing in industrial metropolises. And thus the colonial perspective of science about evolutionism becomes doubtful. There is no single modernization.

It is a fact well known to all biologists that in the individual development of an organism its phylogeny is repeated with more or less accuracy. (...) And a similar principle can be found not only in the biological, but also in the cultural-historical development of mankind. (...) For that reason we see conditions in the social and other cultural institutions of more primitive races of man that the European peoples have gone through during the course of their cultural development and left far behind them. (...) During my journeys through East- and Central Sumatra (1967), for example, I came into areas at the shores of the two Tapungs;, the sources of the river Siak, where conditions and institutions reminded me most strongly of Freytag's "Ahnens", the eagerly devoured reading of my boyhood [Moszkowski 1909].

With these words, written in 1909, the German traveller Max Moszkowski revealed the presuppositions that led him to find "medieval feudalism in Inner Sumatra": soccage and tithe, baron and count; courts with strict ceremonial and knighting.

¹ Por.: Aleksander H., Chambers Q., Draeger D. F. (1970), *Pentjak Silat – the Indonesian fighting art*, Tokio; Chambers Q., Draeger D. F. (1978), *Javanese Silat. The fighting art of Perisai Diri*, Kodansha Int. Ltd., Tokyo-New York-San Francisco; Szymankiewicz J. (1991), *Sztuki walki Melezji, Indonezji, Filipin, Birmy i Tajlandii*, Sawa, Warszawa, s. 39–56 [przyp. red.].

² Za: Henning Eichberg (1983), *Force against force: configurations of Martial Art in European and Indonesian cultures*, "International Review of Sport Sociology", nr 2, s. 33–66 [przyp. red.].

In Sumatran as once in European courts, tournaments (...) are staged in honor of distinguished guests (...). Mock battles are fought with dagger and sword to the sound of music produced by a *tjemplung* – five to seven copper cymbals, beaten with soft mallets – a gong and two drums. In earlier times these battles are said to have frequently ended in serious bloodbaths [Moszkowski 1909].

These were – in his words – conditions as we know them from the early medieval Europe. (...) One sees; Orient and Occident – it is everywhere the same [Moszkowski 1909].

Today we might not express this opinion as naively as did Moszkowski, but in principle it has remained dominant: "Progress", "development" or "the process of civilization" always follows the same lines; the "advanced" countries – meaning us – represent the future while the "backward" ones represent earlier phases in the development of European society. They are what we were³.

The tournament observed by Moszkowski can be a starting point in testing this thesis. However, since he knew even less about the early Middle Ages than he did about Indonesia, a more accurate test of his thesis is the comparison of 20th-century Indonesia and 16th- to 18th-century Europe, where we find sophisticated one-on-one contests and polished court ceremonials with "masters of ceremony" and the stiff formalities of courtly society. We find also a type of fencing that shows some similarities to the material dance of the Malaysians. Here we shall begin our comparison.

The Indonesian fighting art "pencak silat"

The Indonesian *pencak silat*⁴ is a traditional contest that is related to other Asian fighting techniques, like Chinese "shadowboxing" (Kung Fu, Shao Lin, Tai Chi Chuan and Wu Shu)⁵, Japanese Judo and Karate, Hapkido and Aikido or Philippine Arnis and Sikaran⁶. In Indonesia its origin as an independent fighting technique is said to lie with the Minangkabau as well as with the aristocracy of the Srivijaya-empire and the empire of Majapahit. Several

³ As characteristic for the early evolutionism cf. Lewis H. Morgan (1908), *Die Urgesellschaft (Ancient Society). Untersuchungen über den Fortschritt der Menschheit aus der Wildheit durch die Barbarei zur Zivilisation*, Stuttgart. Reprint (= *Kulturanthropologische Studien zur Geschichte*, Suppl. 1), Lollar, 1976. – Evolutionism today: Richard Fritz Behrendt (1972), *Soziale Strategie für Entwicklungslander. Entwurf einer Entwicklungssoziologie*. 2nd ed., Frankfurt/M. 1969. – Critical of this pattern: Gerard Leclerc, *Anthropologie et colonialismes*, Paris. – About the fundamental relativization of the basic views of time cf. Michel Foucault (1966), *Les mots et les choses*, Paris. – August Nitschke [ed.] (1975), *Verhaltenswandel in der Industriellen Revolution. Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte*, Stuttgart. – Wolf Lepenies (1976), *Das Ende der Naturgeschichte. Wandel kultureller Selbstverständlichkeiten in den Wissenschaften des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*, München-Wien.

⁴ Here I describe the *pencak silat* according to my own observations in "West Sumatra (Minangkabau)" 1974/75, cf. Henning Eichberg (1975), *Spielverhalten und Relationsgesellschaft in West Sumatra. Probleme des interkulturellen Vergleichs und Transfers von Leibesübungen in Südostasien*, "Staddon", 1, pp. 1–48, here pp. 25–30. – Kenning Bichberg (1981), *Sozialverhalten und Regionalentwicklungsplanung. Modernisierung in der indonesischen Relationsgesellschaft (West Sumatra)* (= *Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, 3), Berlin, pp. 148–153. – Also Howard Alexander, Quintin Chambers and Donn F. Draeger (1970), *Penjajak-Silat. The Indonesian Fighting Art*, Tokio-Palo Alto. – Ku Ahmad Bin Ku Mustaffa and Wong Kiew Kit (1978), *Silat Melayu. The Malay Art of Attack and Defence*, Kuala Lumpur.

⁵ Chung Check Tow (1971), *Chinesisches Schattenboxen*, Darmstadt. – Bryn Williams [ed.] (1976), *Die Kunst der Selbstverteidigung. Japanische und chinesische Kampfsportarten*, Zollikon. – George G. Tan (1972), *Tai-Chi-Ch'uan Could be the Life Saver of the Century* [in:] Uriel Simri [ed.], *Proceedings of the Pre-Olympic Seminar on the History of Physical Education and Sport in Asia*, Netanya (Israel), pp. 91–96. – Chen Karig (1975), *Wu Shu – ein traditioneller chinesischer Sport* [in:] Dorothea Gentz and others [ed.], *Leistung als Prinzip. Bruno Wischmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, Mainz, pp. 163–166. – Paul Y. Sbiao (1975), *Physical Fitness and Tai-Chi Ch'uan (Shadow Boxing – a Sort of Kung Fu)* [in:] Uriel Simri [ed.] (1974) *Proceedings of the Society on the History of Physical Education and Sport in Asia and the Pacific Area*, Netanya (Israel), pp. 37–44. – In addition, an immense body of literature has emerged out of the process of popular reception recently.

⁶ Celia Bocobo Olivar (1972), *History of Physical Education in the Philippines*, Quezon City, pp. 7, 22. – Gordon B. Olivar (1978), *Arnis de mano: An Indigenous Pinoy Sport*, "Spearhead", University of the Philippines, 1, No. 3, p. 7. – Ramon Tenmatay and R. Chris F. Teston (1979), *Sikaran Is "Alive and Kicking"*, *ibid.*, 2, No. 1, pp. 10–11.

legends connect its origin to Buddhistic teachings of the 13th century, others with the Malayan warrior Hang Tuah in the 14th century. In the villages of the whole archipelago up to Papua, about 60 differing styles can be found.

The pencak silat is characterized by dance-like, esthetic elements, including accompaniment by drums and gongs. For that reason it has traditionally been included within the complex of dance, music and theater called *kesenian*, and has only recently been transformed into a sport or *olahraga*. The conventional European taxonomy of sport and dance, show and serious battle is, not useful for the characterization and definition of the pencak silat. Such a taxonomy would create artificial divisions⁷.

In the traditional pencak silat there exists neither a k.o. nor an outcome computed from scored points. The decision is arrived at through "seeing it." Therefore, the assessment of a performance contains a high degree of what we take to be subjectivity. In addition, a mystical "inner power" is involved that is said to be decisive and is acquired through meditative absorption. Learning the art requires a personal relation between the teacher, guru, and the pupil, murid.

The pencak silat consists of a variety of hand motions with which one attempts to block an opponent's strokes, grabs, and kicks. Such movements are sometimes – just as in the Chinese Shao Lin – named after animal motions: *harimau* tiger, i.e. through clutching), *kucing* (cat, sneak up from below), *beruang* (bear, from the top) or *baruak* (monkey, with clamping). One does not put strength against strength but combines rhythm with cat-like side-stepping. If the opponent attacks, one does not use force against him but rather one steps aside, adopting the opponent's movements and turning them against him. Sometimes the fight consists mostly of a dancelike slinking around the opponent without physical contact. Speed, rhythm, and weaving about are accompanied by drums, which produces an atmosphere of intense emotionality. This effect is furthered by the fighter's rhythmic hand-clapping against their own body, which turns the fight into an acoustical work of art.

It has only been in recent times, especially since 1973, that attempts have been made to transform the pencak silat into a sport of western format⁸. Even today one can experience the traditional battle-dance as Moszkowski described it around the turn of the century:

"Now they grabbed the swords and made mock attacks upon each other. They danced around each other, in circles, lifted the right foot beyond the height of the left knee, swung the sword, dealt out strokes and feints, parried, knelt down and so forth. Thereby the left hand completed motions similar to those of the right. The sword is held delicately between thumb and middle finger, the index finger rests on the grip, the fourth and fifth fingers are pointed into the air. One strikes nearly always out of the hand joint, and that in rhythm with the sounds of the music. Performed by mature, agile fighters the battle appears extremely graceful and charming" [Moszkowski 1909].

Courtly fencing in early modern Europe

Graceful, charming, delicate, dance-like – those, were also the norms of European fencing among the nobility of early modern times⁹. It differed greatly from its precursor, the slash-

⁷ As mistaken classification and typical older ethnographical approach cf. G. J. Nieuwenhuis (1916), *Über den Tanz im malaischen Archipel*, "Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie", 23, pp. 183–240. – Hans Damm (1922), *Die gymnastische Spiele der Indonesier und Südseevölker*, Part 1: *Die Zweikampfspiele* (= Institut für Völkerkundewies, 1, Ud. 5), Leipzig. – Also Erich Mindt, *Der Faustkampf bei den Indonesiern und Südseevölkern. Über alte boxsportliche Darstellungen im Museum für Leibesübungen*, Berlin. No place nor year of publishing (around 1928).

⁸ An early precursor, still in military style: R. A. Koesnoen (1963), *Pentjak Silat*, Bandung. – Then Zubir Lazib, *Pedoman Pelaksanaan Pefwasitan, Juri serta Peraturan Pertandingan Pencak Silat Nasional, Pedang 1974*. – Sarkam Surya-sumatra, *Pencak Silat dengan metode senam*, Yogyakarta 1976. – Same author: *Pencak Silat. Sapta Gerak dengan metode senam*, Yogyakarta 1976. – *Pencak Silat Olahraga, Seri, Senam penepak nusantara* (dilengkapi dengan latihan pendahulu-annya), Jakarta 1877.

and-wrestle fencing of the Renaissance. The latter had been a martial art involving heavy weapons (two-handed swords, daggers, staves), demanding a powerful stroke and a firm taking of the opponent's blow. But since the 16th century, a delicate thrust-fencing, with light weapons (epee, foil) developed, first in Italy, then especially in 17th-century France. Physical educators included this new art at the universities, courts and knightly academies among the noble exercises of dance, riding, fencing, and horse vaulting. Their students were the youth of the increasingly courtly nobility and of the bourgeois upper middle class. Courtly fencing replaced not only the violent tournament fencing of the nobility but also "Klopf"-fencing, done professionally in organized bourgeois fencing corporations. The fencing of the farmers had been outlawed since the peasant wars of the 16th century.

The new form of exercise approximated the configurations of the courtly dance that developed at the same time and reached its peak with the 17th-century minuet. As early as the 16th-century fencing-master literature by Camillo Agrippa (Rome, 1533) and Henri de Saint-Didier (Paris, 1573), increasingly geometric and formalising description and norming of movements appeared. This tendency reached a temporary climax with Girard Thibault (Leiden, 1628). The order of steps, the angle of the body, the position of the legs and arms as well as the distance between the fighters (Mensur) were conceived of as proportions and were graphically illustrated in geometrical forms.

In addition, parrying evolved. In the old slashing style of fencing the best defense had been considered to be good armor and a firm shield, but now one experimented with new defensive techniques such as blocking with the gloved left hand or the coat, such as catlike sidestepping (as in the early Italian rapier-fencing). And increasingly, from the end of the 16th century, there developed the striking away of the opponent's weapon with one's own, i.e., parrying – an expression used since Giacomo di Grassi (Venice, 1570). Then, in the early 17th century, one's own weapon was systematically utilized for defense and for parrying the opponent's attack. This process was connected with the parallel spreading of the lunge (around 1600/1610), which brought about a novel form of collision of the fighters.

Besides "geometrizing" and parrying it was characteristic for courtly fencing to become increasingly stylized through adoption of the "reverence", the minuet foot position, and the lifting of the left arm. In 1736 the French fencing-master Girard introduced the delicately artificial foot position that was later typical for the minuet and for the French variation of fencing. – In 1610, Capo Ferro da Cagli demanded for the first time the lifting of the left hand for the preservation of balance. His instruction also emphasized a graceful appearance. – In the beginning, the reverence consisted of the bow that introduced, structured and concluded the courtly dance. Around the middle of the 17th century, Johann George Pascha described the reverence in fencing: The hat was doffed, the sword lowered, the right foot moved backward, the left forward with a dancelike outward twist; the bow followed. Liancour, the most important fencing author of Louis' XIV reign, turned this into a ceremony of rich and awkward gestures. "Decorum and ease" were the norms of the fencer's greeting and were at the same time characteristic of the style of courtly fencing in general.

So fencing closely approached the courtly dance, with which it was also, connected within the frame of the exercises considered appropriate for the nobility. In 1596, Jean Guilleaume Tabourot taught fencing together with music and dance in his "Orchesographie". The common goal was proper courtly behavior: "Besides fencing you are to learn dance and

⁹ To the following cf. Henning Eichberg (1978), *Leistung, Spannung, Geschwindigkeit. Sport und Tanz im gesellschaftlichen Wandel des 18./19. Jahrhunderts* (=Stuttgarter Beiträge zur Geschichte und Politik, 12), Stuttgart, pp. 61–76. – Also Gustav Hergsell (1896), *Die Fechtkunst im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, Prag. – Karl Gaulhofer (1930), *Die Fusschaltung ein Beitrag zur Stilgeschichte der menschlichen Bewegung* (= Buchreihe der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für körperliche Erziehung, 1), Kassel, pp. 81–104. – Karl E. Lechner (1953), *Die Entwicklungsphasen der europäischen Fechtkunst*, Wien.

ballgames in order to acquire contact with gentlemen and ladies". The weapon dance which he recommended – as an intermediate forth between dance and fencing – never came into existence. Nevertheless, the weapon that had early stuck heavy blows now began to dance.

The dancelike qualities of fencing, however, should not lead one to overlook its serious background: It was the period of serious duels, it was a period of bloodshed in all Europe.

The history of courtly exercise-fencing was brought to a halt around: the turn of the 18th into the 19th century. With the political and social decline of the nobility, courtly fencing came to an end. Wherever fencing continued to be practiced – by gymnasts (Turner) and fraternity students (Burschenschaftler) – it represented a "regression" to the older slash- and "Klopf"-fencing. The position of the leading combat sport that fencing had held for centuries was assumed by boxing, the characteristic combat sport of modern times¹⁰.

Similarities: dance and courtly etiquette

Observing the configurations of motion of the two fighting methods, European exercise-fencing and Indonesian pencak silat, one notes a few similarities that – on first sight – seem to justify Moszkowski's "recognition" of virtual identity.

1. Neither exercise is dependent on sheer power, strength, or force as is, for instance, medieval swordfighting or modern boxing. Both emphasize dexterity.
2. Neither exercise is quantified according to the standards of modern sport, i.e., with measurements in centimeters, grams, seconds or points. (Both have been, however, "modernized" by the introduction of a scoring system.)
3. Both exercises existed in the context of a cluster of similar physical activities. Courtly fencing belonged to the exercises that developed in conjunction with the courtly dance (the leading exercise of the nobility), figure riding, and horse vaulting; occasionally, military drill and court tennis were also included in this category¹¹.

None of these was a force or "achievement" sport. They usually lacked the element of competition (with the exception of court tennis). Competitive running, jumping, and throwing were not practiced as part of this configuration. – In the same manner, Indonesian kesenian, especially dances, as well as the circular ballgame sepak raga¹², were connected with the pencak silat. Here too, there is no competitive running, jumping or casting, no sport of force and no centimeter-gram-second quantification of achievement. (One could, however, put cock and other animal fights as well as gambling, all popular in the Malayain area, into proximity with the pencak silat.)¹³

¹⁰ Eichberg (1978), pp. 80–87. – Maria Kloeren, *Sport und Rekord. Kultursoziologische Untersuchungen zum England des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts* (= Kötöier Anglistische Arbeiten, 23), Leipzig, 1935, pp. 35–36, 60–87. – Albert Him, *Ursprung und Wesen des Sports* (= Leibesübungen und körperliche Erziehung in Theorie und Praxis, 1), Berlin, 1936, pp. 55–60, 65–67, 123–124. – Popular-historical: Robert Hess, *Sie kommen nie wieder. Die abenteuerliche Geschichte des Boxsports*, Frankfurt/M., 1963. – Theo Austermlühle, *Die Entwicklung der Zweikampfsportarten in den 60er Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts*, "Theorie und Praxis der Körperkultur", 1972, 21, pp. 586–594.

¹¹ An extensive source: Valentin Trichter, *Curiöses Rei-Jagd-Fecht-Tantz oder Ritter-Exercitien-Lexicon*, Leipzig, 1742.

¹² Eichberg (1975) (Ftp. 5), pp. 30–32. – Mohammad Yunus Aklbar, *Permainan Sepakraga dan Sepaktakraw*. Jakarta 1974. – About similar forms cf. also: F. M. Trautz (1934), *Kemari, das klassische altjapanische Fussballspiel*. "Nachrichten aus der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens", Berlin–Tokio, 36, pp. 28–34. – Uriel Simri (1972), *The Ancient Chinese Kicking Game and Its Remnants*. [in:] Simri, pp. 81–89.

¹³ About cockfights, Walter Kaudern (1929), *Games and Dances in Celebes* (= Ethnographical Studies in Celebes, 4), Göteteorg, pp. 337–348. – Clifford Geertz (1972), *Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight*, "Daedalus", 101, pp. 1–37. – About the top spinning game: Hans Damm, *Kreiselspiele bei den Indonesiern und Südseevölkern* [in:] Otto Reche [ed.] (1929), *In Memoriam Karl Weule. Beiträge zur Völkerkunde und Vorgeschichte*, Leipzig, pp. 299–334.

4. Both exercises correspond in their dancelike characteristics. Here courtly dancing rapier and Indonesian battle-dance, accompanied by drums, meet. We are reminded of courtly-fencing, based on norms of "decorum, ease, and delicacy", when a pencak-author warns us not to overlook the serious, even potentially deadly background beneath the dancelike surface¹⁴. Also, the dances connected with the pencak silat and with fencing are relatively similar¹⁵.
5. Finally, the two exercises approximate each other through their formalistic and ceremonial aspects. Neither is directed towards, a k.o. nor a quantified achievement. Rather, they develop a form. This starts out with a bow and follows sequences of motions that can be described as theatrical, ceremonial, and delicate, finally to end in another bow. The basic norm is in both cases courtesy, a formal quality that also appears as etiquette. In Europe "courtesy" meant the behavior appropriate at court; polite behavior stood in contrast to indecent, improper "peasant-like" behavior. – In Indonesia this corresponds to the norm of the *alus*, the refined and civilized, that stands in contrast to the rough and raw form, *kasar*. Here too the relation between proper form and improper formlessness is of prime importance. In the resulting "culture of shame" the worst misbehavior consists of offending the other, of giving him, and oneself, *malu*, the loss of face¹⁶. However, the norms of courtesy and *alus* should not disguise the fact that both combats had a potentially deadly background: the lethal pencak silat as well as the baroque duel.

The processes of civilization are different

The congruences between pencak silat and fencing are, however, matched by differences as one's view is redirected from a single period of history towards the long-term sequence of events.

As mentioned previously, Europe's courtly baroque fencing evolved out of slashing combat with heavy weapons. The latter exhibited different shapes in different classes in the late Middle Ages and early modern times. The object in knightly tournaments was a mighty collision of force against force. In the tournament of the 12th–13th century the emphasis was on the opposition of the riders, in the group "buhurt" as well as in the man-against-man "tjost". The fighters collided frontally so that the spears broke and the weaker horse was often thrown to the ground [Niedner 1881]. In the violent tournaments of the 16th century, the object was the frontal resistance against strokes, the impact of the lance, and the giving of "most courageous and mighty blow" [Gurlitt 1889].

Among the bourgeoisie, professionally organized "Klopf"-fencing was also conducted with heavy weapons¹⁷. At show fights, the opponents "beat each other until blood ran, cheered by the crowd that threw money onto the stage. Violent wrestling and scuttling was, also part of this early fencing culture.

¹⁴ Ku Ahmad and Wong (1978) (Fin. 5), pp. 2, 75–76.

¹⁵ "Their motions and attitudes are usually slow, and too much forced to be graceful. (...) The minuets they compare to the fighting of two game-cocks, alternately approaching and receding. Our country-dances they esteem too violent and confused, without showing grace or agility. The stage dances, I have no doubt, would please them." William Marsden (1811), *The history of Sumatra*, 3rd ed., London, p. 267.

¹⁶ On *alus* and *kasar*: Clifford Geertz (1960), *The Religion of Java*, Glencoe, p. 232, on the corresponding *keseanian*-complexes p. 261–302. – On the "culture of shame" cf. Koentjaraningrat, quoted in Ulrich Beyer (1974), *Entwicklung im Paradies. Sozialer Fortschritt und die Kirchen in Indonesien*, Frankfurt/M., -p. 149. – On *malu* as disorder contrasting to *adat*: Barend ter Haar (1948), *Adat Law in Indonesia*, New York, pp. 213–219.

¹⁷ Karl Wassmannsdorff (1870), *Sechs Fechtschulen (...) der Marxbrüder und Federfechter aus den Jahren 1573 bis 1614*, Heidelberg. – Alfred Schaer (1901), *Die altdeutschen Fechter und Spielleute*, Strassburg. – On Switzerland: Walter Schaufelberger (1972), *Der Wettkampf in der alten Eidgenossenschaft. Zur Kulturgeschichte des Sports vom 13. bis ins 18. Jahrhundert*, (= Schweizer Haimatbücher, pp. 156–168), Vols. 1–2, Bern, here Vol. 1, pp. 141–149. – On England: Kloeren (1935), pp. 12–19.

We know less about peasant fencing because it was suppressed by the nobility – mainly due to the experiences of the great German peasant war of 1525. Certain is, however, that it followed the same configuration of force against force, for such a configuration was characteristic of medieval peasant culture, as the following quotation indicates:

"In the year 1533 in Büsen, Dirk Dammers died at the age of 103. At his time he was the strongest man in Dithmarsen. In Stüderdiek he won 16 tons of wheat by lifting them and throwing them on the ground. In towns and lands he could throw the stone and the log eight feet farther than anybody else and once he won great honor for his land when he beat a very strong man who had boasted with his strength. Dammers pulled him over the line or goal with only two fingers"¹⁸.

The force-and-strength-culture expressed itself not only in wrestling and boxing, finger-twisting and "Hosenlupfen" (Swiss wrestling) but also in violent punchball and football games and demonstrations of strength like stone casting and lifting, hammer- and log-throwing. This culture already had its precursor in the battles and agonal games of the early medieval Germanic warriors, as is documented in detail in the Islandic sagas. The violent, often bloody agon of Greek and Roman antiquity shows similar traits¹⁹. Such forms of entertainment have appeared again in modern boxing and football (with precursors in England since the 18-th century).

Thus we see that baroque thrust-fencing represented a refined courtly form that transformed – for two centuries – the frontal battle of force against force into a formal spatial art. May we assume an equivalent evolution for the pencak silat?

Problems with sources make the answer to this question difficult. When Europeans came into the Indonesian archipelago, they encountered courtly cultures with a high degree of etiquette and "civilization". In 1666, a Dutch envoy described a tournament he had witnessed at the court of Mataram. It consisted of a show-fight, introduced by gamelan-music, that sent the riders across the field and then back again. Respectful attention insured that the prince was not seriously thrown out of his saddle, and that young fighters did not start against older ones²⁰. A cult of strong men, as was still common in Europe of the 16th century, did not exist here.

Or perhaps this cult had existed and had died out? Older Malayan literary documents still need to be worked over before this question can be answered, but comparison with the non-courtly village cultures speaks strongly against the presumption that the Indonesian fighting art experienced the same "civilizing process" as the European duel. Neither in the villages of Java nor on the outer, islands has a violent confrontation of force been documented. Dance and topspinning, gambling and cock-fights, the circular ballgame sepak raga do occur in the documents. Even in cultures in which historians and anthropologists thought they recognized "older forms" or "precursors" of the new Indonesian high cultures, one does not find wild, unregulated or "uncivilized" precursors of the pencak silat that might have corresponded to old Germanic fighting. One found rather, or finds almost no fighting art or combat sport at all in the frame of the "old Indonesian" game-culture. No duels among the Mentawaians²¹ on the islands before West Sumatra, no duel on the island Mas [Marshall 1976] or among the Orang Mamma [Schneider 1958] and the Orang Kuibu [Hagen 1968] in Inner Sumatra.

¹⁸ Ant. Heinrich Walther (1683), *Dithmarsische Chronik*, Schleswig,. Cited from Friedrich Ludwig Jahn and Ernst Eiselein (1816), *Die deutsche Turnkunst*, Berlin, reprint: Fellbach, 1967, pp. 275–276. – On the old-European force culture in general see also Eichberg (1978), pp. 24–29, 45–49, 88–98.

¹⁹ Vivid description in Lukian, *Leibesübungen im alien Athen (Anacharsis)*, Zurich, 1963.

²⁰ P. J. Veth (1902), *Het paard onder de volker van het Maleische ras* (= Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie. Supplement to Part 7), Leiden, 1894, pp. 137–141.

²¹ Alfred Maass, *Bei tiebenswürdigen Wilden. Eiti Beitrag zur Kenntnis der Mentawai-Insulaner*, Berlin, on games and dances pp. 130–133.

The path from the "old Indonesians" to the "new Indonesians" does not parallel the European way from a wild to a courtly fight. It does, not lead to a weakening of the principle of force against force, but on the contrary shows – with the occurrence of the peneak silat – an intensification of the fighting principle.

But the negative finding – the overwhelming nonexistence of the confrontation of force against force – is not enough. Structural insights about the different processes of the baroque fencing and the pencak silat are necessary. Narrative literature provides numerous clues.

Literature: the striking and the walking away

If we leave the culture of the exercises of the nobility again to take a few steps backward, then we reach – at the beginning of German literary history – the Hildebrand song. It is preserved through a manuscript of the 9th century.

I heard say
that the challengers met on their own,
Hildebrand and Hadubrand between the armies.
Son and father looked after their armor,
closed their shielding jackets, belted on their sword,
the gigantics, over the rings, to nide to such a battle.

Now Hildebrand asks Hadubrand about his kin and descent, and discovers that he has met his son. But the son does not 'believe him and rejects a present of gold.

Thereupon Hadubrand, Hildebrand's son said:
"One should receive gifts with the lance,
peak against peak...
You are awfully smart, old Hun,
attract me with words, want to cast your lance at me,
so old are you always untrue. (...)"
Then Hildebrand, Heribrand's son, said:
"Now, almighty god; sorrow will come. (...)
He would be most cowardly, the rider from the east,
who would deny you the fight, that you lust so badly for
common pathways. We shall see
who will have to deaf out his armor,
or will reign the the arms of both."
Only then did they drop the lances of ash.
In intense showers they stood firm in shield.
Then they walked together, splitting shields,
dodging blows with the light area of their shields,
until the shields were jagged,
ruined by the weapons [Braune 1958].

Hildebrand's death–song, documented in the old–nordic Edda, describes the end of the battle:

There my dear son lies in front of my face,
the only heir, who became my own;
(I loved him with all iny heart),
against my will, I became his murderer [Genzmer, Heusler 1920].

The account of a battle – "peak against peak" – of a frontal collision, between father and son stands at the beginning of German literature. The observations of the history of the duel as physical exercise find their analogies here.

Let us contrast this with a story about the origin of the Mentawaians. The Mentawaians live near the West Coast of Sumatra in extended families without traditional village structure, without chiefs or any other political hierarchy. Only since the beginning of this century have they come into closer contact with whites (missionaries and colonial officials) and with Suinatrans. I was told the following by the grandfather Abel from Sakelo (Siberut):

"A long time ago two brothers lived here: Silogoukoat and Sitaroonai. One day Sitaroonai was fishing in the river when a box that came from god fell from the skies. Sitaroonai pulled it onto land with his fishing pole and found eight little boys inside, whom he adopted as his children.

One day he ordered them to work in the fields and to climb a tree to pick fruit. But he offended them, so they went off to other areas and villages like Katurei, Mailepet, Taileleu, and others. But as they became hungry they came back and made peace with their guardian. After one year they went in the fields at Sakelo and Siberut Hulu, and grew bananas and taro. They gave the fruits to their father, who was very content.

Some time thereafter, during a great storm, a large tree fell and split the hill at Siberut Hulu into two parts. The eight children, built a large ship from the tree. Here they took in their father, who followed them uneasily, and taught him the wisdom and the progress of the craft: the building of ships, of flying ships, houses, bush knives, axes, fishing nets, boats, oars, and many other things. When Sitaroonai returned home after one year he came upon his brother Silogoukoat. His brother said: You have been sleeping all the time. He did not know about, Sitaroonai's long labor and was making fun of him. Over these malicious and offending words Sitaroonai turned angry and he went off into other lands: to Padang, Medan, Java, and also to Europe. From this time on the descendants of Sitaroonai have, been progressive and wise. But the descendants of Silogoukoat remained on this island and did not want to learn. The people of Mentawai are not progressive and wise because of that offense. The eight children returned to their place of origin, the sky, where they form a constellation of seven stars and the moon."

This story contains new experiences that evolve out of the cultural conflict with colonial and neo-colonial Western civilization, but it treats these according to a traditional pattern: according to the sequence of offense and departure. Twice an offense occurs, and each time the offended person reacts not like Hildetorand – with resistance and frontal counterattack – but by avoidance.

This reaction is not arbitrary. Of 16 Mentawai stories recorded during the 1920's²² seven center on offenses. The offended, person never reacts by fighting, in five stories he simply leaves. Sometimes he is also metamorphosed into an animal. In only one story does he respond with poisoning magic. Duels can be found in only one story – but among, animals. Even open quarrels are rare: They occur in only two stories – but as quarrels among women.

Only in comparison to such patterns of behavior does it become clear how much European warrior-society differs from Indonesian culture. Neither the Hildeferand-song nor the story of Sitaroonai are exceptions to their own culture. European tales are crowded with warriors and heroes in battles and brawls [Nitschke 1978–1977]. Germanic, Greek and Roman mythology is full of fights among gods and heroes. This pattern can be traced from the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf, the German Nibelungen-song, the French *chanson de geste* and the Scandinavian sagas far into the Middle Ages. Similarly, the popular literature of the 19th and 20th centuries usually centers on fighting: Cooper's and Karl May's Indian tales, trivial western and crime-stories, Tarzan, Asterix, and Jerry Cotton.

The literary phenomenon of the heroic boast and challenge illustrates what differentiates Europe from Indonesia. The heroic boast was a dialogue that intensified into serious invective

²² Edwin Loeb (1929). *Mentawai Myths*. "Bijdragen tot de taal- en volkenkunde van Nederlandseh-Indie". 85. pp. 66–244. Story No. 12 about Sakombut gives a variant of this story about Sitaroonai.

(often while drunk) and during which one bragged of one's own and derogated one's opponent's strength. One could emphasize one's own achievements in wrestling, swimming, iceskating, archery, one's courage in warfare or one's imperviousness to alcohol. Kings engaged in heroic boasting, and even gods were said to use such "words of jealousy" [Konigsbuch Snorris (Heimskringla) 1965].

Such boasting would have been unimaginable, or at least intolerable, in a Minangkabau village, at a Javanese court, or in a Mentawai clan. The inflicting of malu, of humiliation, would have been a grave disturbance of the world order. The headhunt, prepared for with threatening verses on the ceremonial drum, tudukat, did exist in Mentawai, as did the pako, a competitive situation among the clans similar to warfare. The clans would provoke each other with boasts of their achievements – monkey hunt, construction of wooden birds – and would drum these out on the tudukat [Schefold 1973, 1998], but this was always a collective matter of the clan; never would one person stand out as an individual, nor did the pako and the headhunt develop into a duel, but rather into an ambush with bow and arrow, and only in rare cases an aggressive frontal confrontation between two clans.

Castle, ting, and fighting parties

Are the described idiosyncracies of the European and the Indonesian duel and the stories of the Germans and the Sumatrans only a matter of games and tales, or are these cultural elements embedded in societal realities?

There is some evidence. As soon as the ancient Germans entered the "light of history" – i.e., the view of Roman authors – they did so as warriors; they set strength against strength and shield against spear and sword. Tacitus described weapon as marriage and as funeral gifts, frequent brawls among the drunken wartiots, and warfare as the passtime of the Germanic youth. Correspondingly, society was organized in a way that Dumezil described as trifunctional. One of the three important functions, besides the political and the economic – was the military, structuring the gods in heaven as well as the society on earth. This was not only true among the Germans, but among all old European peoples²³.

How different are the equally enterprising Minangkabau of Sumatra. Where a Minangkabau nobility developed – which only occurred to a limited extent – it constituted itself not as a warrior-nobility but as a rice-field nobility (which was the economic base instead of military warfare) and as adat-legal nobility (which was the social function). Here totally different groupings corresponded to European trifunctionalism: The three-storied roof of the mosque revealed the coexistence of the clan chiefs (penghulu), the religious dignitaries (imam-chatib), and the masses (urang banyak). And in the village council the penghulu, Islamic alim ulama, and the cerdik pandai (the legal functionaries) shared the seats²⁴.

The difference was also visible in the architecture. It is true: Since there were clan and village feuds in Minangkabau and in other Indonesian populations, the villages were fortified to a certain degree [Abdullah 1866]. The long-houses of the nobility were decorated more ornately than those of other families. But nothing came even close to the castles and towers of the bellicose nobility of the European Middle Ages, nor to the knight's heavy iron armor. The European castle was not simply the result of some abstract "military necessity" but was significant for the social organization of European, society. The bastion forts of the baroque period followed this line – on a new level – at a time when fencing wags transformed into a delicate spatial art [Bachtiar 1967].

²³ Tadtus, *Germania* [in:] Wilhelm Capelle [ed.] (1937), *Das alte Germanien. Die Nachrichten der griechischen und römischen Schriftsteller*, Jena, pp. 412–443.

²⁴ Dumezil Georges (1955) *Aspects de la fonction guerriere chez les Indo-Europeens*, Paris. On the theoretical context: Jean-Claude Riviere and others (1979), *Georges Dumezil a la decouverte des Indo-Europeens*, Paris.

The Sumatran legal system was and is another, area of social life whose configuration differed from Europe's. The legal decisions of a medieval Icelandic *ting* conveys one impression:

"The trial during its entire course takes on the appearance of a fight. As before, the parties stand opposite each other like groups of fighters. Even the way in which the plaintiff and the accused seek assistance is totally reminiscent of a preparation for a great battle. (...) It is not important for the associates to be familiar with the details of the proceeding. Rather they consider whether the man whom they are asked to help is known as a reliable man-of-honor (...) The court does not lead the proceedings in the sense that it orders the exact course of events. This develops on its own from speech and counter-speech of the quarreling parties. (...) Both plaintiff and accused try to convince the other side, not the neutral judge, that their defense or complaint stands no chance. (...) During each phase of the trial a development towards voluntary settlement or violent selfhelp is possible."

In contrast to this system of force against force, strength against strength, speech against counter-speech, the traditional Indonesian legal, system, *adat*, conveys a different impression of a ceremony, toning down and even eliminating conflict: Such a legal event has been described for a Minangkabau village some years ago:

"A quarrel began in a coffee shop when a man remarked that during the hot season it is better to own a rice field at the head of the irrigation, ditch than at the end. Another man who had leased a rice field at the end to the farst man took this remark personally and became physically violent after a dispute. Bystanders parted the two and reported the incident to the village authorities. At the location of the incident, the coffee shop, a ceremony was performed – after preparatory questioning of eye-witnesses – whose course was determined by the village chief and his security chief, as well as by the security chief of the district who happened to be present.

In hierarchical devotion a ritualistic dialogue began between these authorities: "Luck is as the whole day, bad luck is as but the wink of an eye. Yes, it is bad luck that we have gotten, a dispute has occurred in our village. So what should be done now? It's best we untangle what is tangled. Let us clear up what is muddy..." The development of the quarrel is told. "...If the tangle is at the tip of the rope, look for the beginning of the rope. If the water is muddy at the mouth of a river, we must come back to its source..." – Then one turned to the two quarreling parties. Upon the question whether they would agree to a ruling of the village authorities both gave their agreement in ceremonial verses. "...One path, one destination, one word, one meaning between us, me and you. Yes, that is truly what I wish..." The security chief of the district then turned to those present: "...The cotton White, look at the thread; the heart white, observe the behavior..." The two quarrelers were asked to shake hands and received the approval of everybody in a chorus. Which of the two was to stretch out his hand first was determined by the saying: "The old are tolerant, the young do what they desire". The older was asked to take the first conciliatory step. With picturesque speeches the two shook hands. "...We will have one direction, one irrigation ditch, one house o prayer, one coffee shop one district... Everyone smiled contentedly, the village security chief closed the meeting and everybody went back to his business. The village authorities reported the case closed to the chief of the district" [Niedner 1913].

Here the behavior patterns passed down from the old *adat* are reestablished in the frame of a modern bureaucratic-democratic district and village hierarchy: hierarchical order rather than confrontation, formulae of respect, traditional poetic and formula-like dialogue, inner self-control and outer harmony. The factual core of the dispute – in our view – was never touched upon. This is equivalent to the Germanic *ting*, but lacking in antagonistic structure.

In the same way that the *adat* is oriented towards the elimination of *past malu* or *offence* and quarrel, a pattern of dialogue is practiced in Indonesia that is oriented towards the avoidance of future quarrel: *musyawarah*. *Musyawarah* is the type of communication

traditionally used in the clan or village council, but it is now used in modern organizations and even in the military. It is not properly translated as "discussion" because this European term connotes backtalk, opposition, antagonism, party dualism, polemic, conflict, and confrontation, all of which are avoided in *musyawarah*. Rather, all participants – often according to rank – align their opinions; each tries to repeat and vary – with nuances – the statement of the previous speaker.

In the end, this process leads to a consensus without vote, *mufakat*. For the European observer, such a result is often unclear. No isolated factual outcome has emerged and no battle has been fought. But for the Indonesian the result is clear; human relationships have been clarified and a consensus – more important than a factual finding – has been attained.

For that reason politics in Indonesia, in spite of the internalization of foreign, Western forms, has gone a clearly different path from those in Europe. Politics in Europe, since the beginning of the modern or industrial era in the late 18th century, has been characterized by frontal confrontation between two parties or two blocks of parties: the "right" and the "left", the "conservatives" and the "progressives". Already the implicit imagery of these popular terms shows that the issue is more often conceptualized as a duel ("right" against "left", the "front" against the "back") than as a concrete factual question.

The right-left conflict replaced the corporate system and the courtly intrigues of the Ancien Regime at the same time that boxing replaced the dance-like noble art of fencing. Both levels were configuratively connected.

Parties after the European model formed in Indonesia at the beginning of the 20th century, but the antagonistic right-left pattern has never come into existence. Instead, reform Islamic, traditional Islamic, Indonesian nationalist, Socialist, Communist, Protestant and Catholic parties and their mass-organization (*aliran*) developed in an entangled complex of alliances and oppositions. Again and again, Indonesian political positions failed to fit the European left-right pattern. Therefore, the nationalism of Sukarno appears as pro-Communist and reform Islam seems simultaneously ultra-theocratic and modern reformist.

Indonesia goes its own way even in the military sector that would seem to require an antagonistic behavior pattern as does no other part of society. In officers' meetings lasting many days, one seeks a consensus [Tanner 1969]. Even during warfare, as in the Sumatra rebellion 1958/61, a compromise – hard to comprehend for the western observer – was possible. An Indonesian officer says about this war:

"This could only happen in Indonesia. That is our problem. We are much too tolerant. Our life lacks sharp definitions. The result is that our conflicts – as our likings – last forever. Nothing really ends, because nothing really begins" [Nöbel 1972].

In *pencak silat*, the fighters dance around each other. The boxer's *k.o.* punch never comes.

"Gentle savages" and "gentle civilized" people

From the above it has already become apparent that the observation of the duel leads to insights into basic processes of the social structure. First, we not only encounter old cultural characteristics that only here and there remain as "traditions" in the present, but we also achieve a new perspective on typically modern behavior patterns – in Europe as in Indonesia. Second, we do not conclude as one might have suspected with the peculiarities of (European and Asian) courtly society structurally distant from our industrial age. On the contrary, in Indonesia the *pencak silat* points far beyond the courtly sector toward village society. Much of what might at first sight seem to be typical aristocratic civilization and refinement can also be found among Indonesian peasants. And third: scrutiny of the origins of the physical exercises and the comparative area of literature did not lead us into societal byways; they brought out configurations that are of central importance for societal life. They also include more

than the structure of politics. The reference to *musyawarah* and *malu*, to legal dispute and position taking, shows that insights into questions of everyday life are also to be expected.

One hypothesis in advance: The knife on our daily dinner table might be a symbol of that aggressive structure that distinguishes our everyday behavior from that of the Indonesian. The table knife is not as self-evident and practically necessary as it has for a long time appeared to us. Norbert Elias pointed out that it has a complicated social-historical function. In the beginning it was the only individually I used eating tool in Europe. Few knife-regulations restricted its use in the Middle Ages (for example, the cleaning of the teeth with the knife was prohibited). For the first time in 1560, one was expected to hold the knife by its point and present the handle when passing it on. Now the threatening element of the table knife became apparent and embarrassing. Step by step, the weapon was rounded off, until its shape became harmless. In addition there was an array of knife-tabus: don't place the knife in your mouth, don't wrap your whole hand around it, don't eat fish with it, nor potatoes, nor eggs nor other round objects, don't use it unless absolutely necessary. In short, according to Elias, the knife as, "death and danger symbol" was "tamed" by the civilizing process²⁵. This occurred exactly during the time (16th–18th centuries) when slash- and "Klopf"-fencing was transformed into courtly fencing.

"The Europeans are barbaric. They eat with swords": Elias cites the Chinese opinion. But not only the Chinese – with emperor, royal court, towns, and civil-service nobility – have banned the knife from their table. In Indonesia too the knife is avoided at meals: This is true at the Javanese courts, among the Minangkabau peasants as well as in the pile houses of the Mentawaians. Perhaps the Indonesians have already had in the beginning what the European "Civilizing process" of the 16th–18th centuries is aimed at (perhaps without ever reaching it): the total elimination of the symbol of aggression, the knife, from the (communal) table. What does that signify for the structure of aggression in everyday life?

I spent four weeks of the summer 1979 with my wife in a clan family of the Mentawaians in Sakelo on Siberut. During this time, only once did we witness child-beating by a grown-up (a woman). This infuriated, all the village inhabitants: "We are ashamed". One lets the children be, even the naughty and the stubborn ones, even when they endanger themselves (with a bush knife or fire). When a boy yells angrily, he is ignored and not reprimanded. After a while, one takes him into one's arms and he becomes calm. It is appropriate to this non-authoritarian, chiefless social structure that warnings to the children are subtle and pacific. Requests are seldom emphatic. Only here and there somebody warningly raises his fist against a naughty child – and laughs at the same time.

Is it only forced or pedagogic inner discipline to which the grown-ups subject themselves out of benevolence towards their children? To think so would be ethnocentric. It speaks to the contrary that the children are already gentle and conciliatory. And one could not suppose any such "pedagogic" consideration on their part. During the entire time of our stay we only witnessed one quarrel among the large group of village children. And even this did not develop into a fight, but only became apparent to us when one of the involved – already three-hundred feet from the scene – began to scream while running away. Avoiding is obviously not only a theme of the Mentawai tales – and not only a technique of the *pencaik silat*.

We experienced only three disputes among the grown-ups of the village. (These relatively "frequent" incidents may be a consequence of the pressure that has recently, since about 1950, forced the Mentawaians out of their native single-clan life style into larger multi-clan village units.) But even the dispute had its peculiarity: Although there was loud scolding, this was not directed against the other party but at the scolder's side. At first we

²⁵ Cited by James Mossman (1961), *Rebels in Paradise. Indonesia's Civil War*, London, p. 107, see also pp. 99–100, 102, 140, 175.

could not identify a two-person dispute as such because we had the impression that the two opponents were arguing with a third person. Their eyes were directed into different directions. Also, it is customary not to name the other directly but to say, "There is someone, about whom I could say bad things."

This is clearly not the configuration of strength against strength we are used to from Europe. Through such Sumatran experiences, we may become sensitized to the fighting behavior of European children, to the violence between parents and children, to the village brawls, and to the peculiar structure of aggression in our daily life, in short, to the European culture of rowdies.

Experience in the community of Mentawaians is not unique. One traveller who visited the "old-Malayan" Orang Mamma in the years around 1890 described "gentle savages" and experienced them as "peaceful" and "benevolent"²⁶. Wolfgang Pfeiffer, a psychiatrist, made similar observations under different circumstances among the "young-Malayan" Sundanese in Western Java, peoples who have behind them a long history in the frame of Hindu and Islamic cultures. There, "the impulses of the infant are not suppressed, its wants and especially its not-wanting are respected. (...) So the infantile aggressions expire in an atmosphere of friendly-indifferent patience. Conflicts between children are prevented from the beginning, for example, by a grown-up stepping to. As a result, one rarely witnesses a quarrel or a serious fight. In just the same way, a grown-up will hardly attempt to insist upon a claim through the use of force; rather he will give in or report the matter to a person of authority. (...) Punishment in our definition hardly exists. Physical punishment is especially deplored. According to common opinion, children that are beaten will become defiant, will lose respect for their parents and will behave maliciously against other children."

Children's games are structured accordingly. For the Sundanese, "game means primarily to be in community (...). It is regarded as inappropriate to stand out; or to outdo others. Comparison of strength and aggressive confrontations are missing. One runs together, but without asking who is first; one plays ballgames, but without winners and losers. The characteristics of our competitive games do not exist: the full deployment of one's strength, sweating it out (...). But when a child has a propensity to quarreling or fighting, this is thought to be a sign of deplorable upbringing. The other children are discouraged from, resisting arid are advised to withdraw from the "bad child"²⁷.

Withdrawal instead of resistance, "gentle savages" and "gentle civilized people" – that is the context of behaviour in the light of which the pencak silat must be interpreted. And it stands in contrast to the European culture of rowdy fighters in the frame of which courtly fencing developed.

From violent fight to mathematical order

Thus the structural characteristics of Indonesian pencak silat and Indonesian behavioral pattern can – by their contrast – help to make evident some specific traits of our European early modern fencing. What was the historical position of courtly fencing on the path from earlier violent fights, force against force, to "industrial" boxing? And how was it rooted in the societal configurations of its epoch, of 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries?

While in Indonesian fighting art and society the relations between persons (guru-murid-patterns, patronage structures, clan-relations) are of fundamental importance, the "social space" of early European fencing, was different. European exercises, connected with courtly fencing, could be practised by isolated individuals. In figure riding as in horse vaulting the

²⁶ Elias Norbert (1977), *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, 3rd ed. (= Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 158), Frankfurt/M., pp. 164–169. – Less critical and less sociological: Alma Helfrich-Dörner (1959), *Messer, Löffel, Gabel, seit wann?* Schwäbisch Hall.

²⁷ Schneider, 1958, pp. 225–226.

individual described geometrical figures in space. The geometrical-choreographical order of body and environment seems to have been more important than interindividual "relations" of the Indonesian type.

The geometrical formalizations of early modern fencing have already been referred to. In 1553 Camillo Agrippa tried to fit the movements and positions of the fencer's arms and legs to mathematical-geometrical patterns. Agrippa – himself a mathematician and engineer – stated about fencing, "that this profession can only be executed by application of points, lines, times, distances and the like. These originate from mathematical considerations, that is from geometry only" [Pfeiffer 1963].

So he tried to "prove" by geometrical reasons the movements he advised, for example the advantages of the thrust instead of the cut. The thrust required a shorter way and less strain and was more difficult to be counteracted.

A thrust forward in direct line on the shortest way, supported by the weight of the body, can only result from a perfect theory; and a practice of many years²⁸.

Although Agrippa himself sometimes seems to have doubted whether he "wrote a treatise on geometry instead of the art of fencing", this did not hamper the success of his method. The long-lasting preponderance of the Italian school of fencing over the French was later explained by French authors by pointing to this theoretical approach of Agrippa. It was he who made the art of fencing a neighbour or even a part of geometry. And this he did not because of personal genius; he merely followed a pattern which was needed by and was convincing for the society he lived in.

In the same way Angelo Viggiani dal Montone argued in 1560:

"I remind to the fact, that in the art of fencing three dimensions or extensions of space must be considered, namely the length, the breadth and the depth (...). We also borrow from geometry the triangle, the square, the pentagon, the hexagon, as well as the circle and similar figures, which are all employed in sword fencing²⁹."

The other national schools of fencing followed this pattern. Henri de Saint-Didier, the first French fencing authority, 1573, laid stress especially upon the way that the fencer should put his feet on the ground geometrically on triangles and squares³⁰. Spanish authors emphasized more the "secret" and "hermetic" aspects of fencing geometry. For Jeronimo Sanchez de Carranza it was fundamental that "a perfect knowledge of theory must – in spite of all physical disadvantages – lead to infallible victory in the end"³¹. And his successor Don Luys Pacheco de Narvaez constructed in 1600 a special system of geometrical signs to describe and explain the configuration of the fencers, quoting Euclid and Archimedes. He laid special stress on the regulation of the space between the fencers³². This hermetical-geometrical school of fencing found its culmination in the speculative "circle fencing" of Girard Thibault, 1628, who integrated the geometry of the human body, the geometry of the sword and its movements, and the geometry of the fencing hall into a comprehensive mathematical space configuration³³.

²⁸ Agrippa Camilo (1553), *Trattato di Scientia d'Arme ...*, Rome, quoted from Hergsell, 1896, pp. 97–116. – Cf. also Eichberg, 1978, pp. 63–73.

²⁹ Angelo Viggiani dal Montone, *Lo Schermo...*, Venice, 1575, quoted from Hergsell, 1896, pp. 206–207

³⁰ Henri de Saint-Didier (1573), *Traicté contenant les secretes du premier livre sur l'espée seule...*, Paris, extracts and illustrations in Hergsell, 1896, pp. 183–201.

³¹ Jeronimo Sanchez de Carranza (1582), *Libro ... que trata de la filosofia de las armas...*, Lisbon, quoted from Hergsell, 1896, pp. 121.

³² Don Luys Pacheco de Narvaez (1600), *Libro de las Grandezas de la Espada...*, Madrid, cf. Hergsell, 1896, pp. 269–275.

³³ Thibault Girard (1628), *Académie de l'Espée ou se démontrent par régies mathématiques sur le fondement d'un cercle mystérieux la théorie et pratique des vrais et jusqu'à présent incognus secrets du maniement des armes à pied et à cheval*, Leiden.

It was in the same time and process that the parry, developed since the end of the 16th century, transformed fencing to a still higher degree into a spatial work of art. While before the attention had been concentrated on the choreography of steps and distances (*mensura*, *mésure*), the geometry of fencing now expanded from the crossing of the epee into the three dimensions of space.

Exercise hall and social geometry

Thus it had been the confrontation of force against force which transformed itself into a geometrical order of space. This development was not "natural". Another possible direction of development from early violent fencing was later taken by boxing, which emerged – alongside of the courtly fencing – from the art of English professional fencing masters in the early 18th century.

The configurational context of the spatial-mathematical way of fencing can also be seen from the fact, that simultaneously all the other noble exercises also transformed themselves into geometrical forms – whether it was the choreography of minuet or the vaulting figures, the track figures of riding, or the formations of military evolutions, the positions of pike drilling or the spatial art of court, tennis³⁴. Even the somersault was – by Tuccaro – formalized as "saut des cercles" and subjected to "regie, mesure et proportion" – although this violent exercise turned out to be rather inappropriate to the norms of geometrical measurement and moderation [McClelland 1980].

The geometrical organization of space in fencing as well as in the other noble exercises of the 16th–18th centuries shows a process of configuration obviously different from the Indonesian *pencak silat*. It may help us to correct the introductory supposition that words like "graceful", "charming", "delicate" and "dance-like" could be sufficient to compare Indonesian and early European fighting techniques. In contrast to Indonesia the European courtly fencing developed out of a confrontation of strength against strength which became transformed into a spatial work of art; and this proved to be only one step in a special European process of civilization which – in the early 19th century – withdrew that geometrization in favor of a new violent confrontation, creating "industrial" boxing. In contrast to Indonesia, too, the mathematical transformation of the duel, was a step on the path towards a certain type of rationalization and quantification in the epoch of sport and achievement.

Moreover, another characteristic differentiated the two processes of civilization. The environment of Baroque fencing was the fencing-room or "Fechtboden". This was not only a "natural" shelter against the inclemency of the weather, but the enclosed space, the walls encircling the playing or exercising society, had a social meaning. It was not by accident that the courtly dance was performed in the hall and that the ramp began to separate the professional dancers from the spectators. The figure riding, too, was an indoor exercise, in the manege. Court tennis created the ballhouse, 250 of which were counted in Paris in 1596. This, too, was not only a result of external material conditions, of climate and rain protection. But the walls were a boundary and limit between courtly society and the people. Moreover, they were part of the configuration of play and exercises itself. In the ballhouse the ground was marked by squares and lines, the walls by winning holes; the ball was played against the walls and the roofs – a sort of three-dimensional billiard. And for fencing, Thibault marked the ground of the fencing hall with geometric lines and patterns, thus demonstrating the

³⁴ About the geometrical transformations of dancing from Renaissance to Baroque cf. especially: Rudolf zur Lippe (1974), *Naturbeherrschung am Menschen*, Vols. 1–2, Frankfurt/M. Vol. 2 is about "Geometrizing of man representation of private life in French absolutism". – Convincing interpretations and illustrations about dance, fencing, and military drill can be found to Gaulhofer, 1930.

spatial totality of hall, body, arms, and movement. Baroque fencing like the other noble exercises of that time was part of a hall culture³⁵.

The Indonesian fighting art – in contrast – did not show this spatial connection to the hall. Although frequent tropical rains would provide a good reason for sheltered space, it was an open-air exercise just like the circle ball game sepak raga or the dances in the villages.

But what was the social meaning of the hall and of the geometrical spatiality of Baroque fencing. This cannot be reflected upon in detail, but we can point to some configurational equivalents³⁶.

In painting, this was the epoch when central perspective became dominant, submitting the imaginary space to the rules of geometry and to the central point of construction³⁷. In the French garden this perspective could be seen at work transforming natural landscape into abstract geometrical and symmetrical solids and ornaments [Heennebo, Hoffmann 1965, 1978]. The radial ideal cities in Italy, France, Germany and Sweden showed, that the submission of nature and the submission of people under architectural norms were working hand in hand [Eimer 1961].

But this was not only a question of esthetic arrangements. The rise of modern sciences in the 17th century – "nova scientia" of Kepler and Galileo – was combined with neoplatonist concepts centered on geometry.

"Geometry which is eternal like God and shining out from God's spirit has (...) applied for God the images for shaping the world, in order to make this world the best and the most beautiful and the most similar to its creator" [Kepler 1967].

Thus all sciences could be subordinated to the super-science of geometry. It regulated the world, which was thought to be a – physical, astronomical – huge mechanism or clock, moving around and around regularly in three-dimensional space.

The same categories dominated the emerging sciences of life. Borelli, the founder of the iatromechanic school, tried to reduce the motions of the animals to, mechanics and to "the concepts of pound, prop, block-and-pulley, wheel for lifting, wedge, spiral inding, etc., and as the scientific perception of everything is mainly based on geometry we may suppose that God in creating the animals' organisms has pursued geometry and that we need geometry for their understanding. For it is the only and appropriate science to read and understand the divine script in the world of animals" [Borelli 1927].

The same happened with the concept of man as centrally (from the pineal gland) steered automation in the opinion of Descartes or as "l'homme-machine" in the mind of De la Mettrie. The discovery of the circulation of the blood by Harvey was derived from the same model of geometrical order. And the classificatory natural history of the 18th century (Linné) concentrated all its attention on the geometrical aspects, of the plant, on line, surface, form, and relief, on spatial proportion and quantities.

Again, this was not limited to intellectual concepts only. But this configuration was part of social reality and social life. The "sociogenesis of the state" (Norbert Elias) in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries with its centralistic and bureaucratic order, with its courts and its "social discipline" (Gerhard Oestreich) reflected a pattern of social geometry. The exercise

³⁵ Henning Eichberg (1981), *Stoppuhr, Reck und Halle. Zur Technisierung der Leibesübungen im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert* [in:] Ulrich Troitzsch [ed.], *Technologischer Wandel im 18. Jahrhundert*, Wolfenbüttel, pp. 155–174. – Same author: *Zivilisation und Breitensport. Die Veränderung des Sports ist gesellschaftlich* [in:] Gerhard Huck [ed.], *Sozialgeschichte der Freizeit. Untersuchungen zum Wandel der Alltagskultur in Deutschland*, Wuppertal, 1980, pp. 77–93.

³⁶ For some more in-depth reflections see Eichberg (1978) (Fin. 11), especially pp. 215–219. – Same author: *Geometrie als barocke Verhaltensnorm. Fortifikation und Exerzitien*, "Zeitschrift für historische Forschung", 1977, 4, pp. 17–50, also Eichberg, 1980.

³⁷ On the societal meaning of perspective see August Nitschke (1975), *Kunst und Verhalten. Analoge Konfigurationen* (= *Problemata*, 40), Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt, pp. 83–96.

hall developed in the configurational context of military "barracks, schools, and asylum-prisons (Michel Foucault). Centralization and circulation marked the rise of the manufactory as well as of "the entire state as a national factory" (Rudolf zur Lappe).

Even the art of war showed patterns of geometrical order: formal drill, linear tactics, geometrical systems of bastionary fortification (Vauban), formalized attack (Eichberg 1977).

In this comparison, the development of early modern European fencing unveils a configuration that was not only esthetically structured, not only intellectually constructed, but also reflective of patterns dominating the structure of knowledge as well as the political and social order. How deeply rooted in societal configuration fencing was, was shown in the later process of transformation; with the breakdown of the Ancien Regime during the social and industrial revolutions fencing lost its significance; it disappeared together with the other noble exercises and did not come back until the end of the 19th century – but now transformed into another configuration of behavior. It became a sport of the "industrial" and achievement type. But this is no longer our topic.

The process and the configurational context of European fencing contrasted to those to be found in Indonesia. Our fencing was a step on the – discontinuous – path from a warrior society to an industrial. It was a transformation of violent fight into a spatial order corresponding to the social geometry of its epoch.

Characteristics of configuration

The above shows clearly that it does not suffice to compare behavior patterns in Europe and to Indonesia (and within these two areas there are many differences) on a linear scale of more or less "civilization", of aggression versus the suppression of aggression. Neither a justification of European bellicosity nor an idealization of Indonesian tolerance is appropriate. Rather, the objective is to gain an insight into differences, in structure and process – a contribution to taking them seriously and to reflecting on our own identity.

How inapropos an idealization of the Indonesian "lack of aggression" would be, is brought out by variety of phenomena, some of which have already been mentioned:

- the headhunt of the Mentawaians and other "old-Indonesian" peoples as well as the early cannibalism of the Batak,
- the magic of damage and poisoning – and the fear of this,
- the permanent war among clans and villages of several "old-Indonesian" societies,
- provocative techniques like the already mentioned pako in Mentawai,
- the popular cockfights and other animal fights,
- torturing of animals, for example the "pet" bird that flies tied to a string until it dies³⁸,
- the lethal perspective of the pencak silat, but also the term "killing" in the Mentawaiian top-spinning game or the "game of killing" in Nias [Marschall 1976],
- the old tradition of piracy, for example in Aceh and Bugis,
- a variety of psychological disorders and conflicts [Pfeiffer 1971],
- the eruptions of ethnic pogroms, especially against the Chinese, and the massacre of 1965/66³⁹,
- the war against "black" Indonesians, against Moluccans, Papua and Timoresia [Schülz 1971].

Such phenomena have – however – to be understood in the frame of patterns of behaviour like those of the pencak silat. But how are these characterized – and how do these

³⁸ We observed this in Mentawai, see also Pfeiffer (1963), p. 309.

³⁹ Ulrich Jeromin (1966), *Die Überseechinesen. Ihre Bedeutung für wirtschaftliche Entwicklung Südostasiens* (= Ökonomische Studien, 12), Stuttgart.– Einar Schlereth and Batjo Daeng Bintang (1970), *Indonesien: Analyse eines Massakers*. Frankfurt/M. – Also: *Buru, eine Gefangeneninsel in Indonesien*, Amnesty International [ed.], London–Bonn 1976.

differ from the configuration of the duel in Europe (and in this context from the configuration of the exercise fencing)?

1. The negative differences are the most apparent: The Indonesian duel, in comparison with the European, does not (or not primarily) set strength against strength, force against force. It does not cultivate frontal resistance. European courtly fencing stood in a (discontinuous) historical line from slash-fencing to modern boxing. Central to it was the concept of frontal resistance; by blocking through parrying and transforming the configuration of strength against strength into a sword-clashing spatial art. Thus, it definitely belonged in the line that led from the old European heroic boasting and challenge of the "strong man" (and Berserker) to the right-left conflict of modern politics, to the "battle of production" during industrialization, and to the sport of boxing.

2. In contrast, one reacts in the pencak silat by side-stepping and dancing in circles. This is certainly an efficient technique with a potentially deadly outcome. Narrative stories of the Mentawaians and the resolving of conflicts in the praxis of Indonesian everyday life show that this sidestepping is rooted in a behavioral conduct beyond the realms of sports.

3. Together with the Indonesian circular ballgame and with the European-derived ballsports of the pingpong pattern (volleyball, table tennis, badminton, tennis, Indonesian soccer) the Indonesian duel demonstrates collaboration during opposition (or vice versa: opposition through collaboration). Achievement is neither an abstract form nor a separate formal quality; it is a form of relation among people; Here in sports and games relational behavior becomes visible in a serious and vivid way⁴⁰.

4. In contrast European exercises connected with courtly fencing could also be practiced by isolated individuals describing geometrical figures in space. Instead of a place within a relationship, a special connection to spatial order could be found. In Baroque fencing, this developed out of choreographies as well as out of parrying, so that it represented a further development and transformation of the older tradition of strength-resistance-configuration. The fencing-room corresponding to dance hall, ballhouse, and riding hall demonstrated that the enclosed space was an essential part of Baroque exercise culture.

5. The social space of European development stretches beyond the physical space. It is connected with a world-view of central perspective and the sociogenesis of central state. Thus, courtly fencing appeared within a definite institutional framework (following preexisting fencing schools and fencing organizations): knightly academies, fencing literature, institutionalized fencing masters (parallel to: territorial state, court, bureaucracy, standing army, officers; manufactory). In Indonesia, the impartion of the pencak silat was never separated to that extent from the individual person of the teacher, the guru. It remains to be seen whether the pencak silat modern will survive the recent transition to the abstract institutional form of schooling and to written pencak literature.

The guru-murid patterns of the traditional duel, of the medicine men, dukun, and of the mystical sects point towards the characteristics of the relational culture. This may be an indication that the conspicuously inintense "bureaucratization" of contemporary Indonesia obeys laws, different from the Western variant of bureaucracy.

6. As for social space, structural questions can be raised concerning social time. One can begin with an observation that connects the pencak silat with courtly fencing: a certain – as we perceive it – lack of tension or thrill⁴¹. Since the formation of industrial societies in the late 18th century, temporal expectations in Europe reoriented themselves towards a new time scheme in which a definite result in the future or an "incredible event" became the motivating focus of excitement: through the record in centimeter-gram-second-sport

⁴⁰ About relational behaviour in detail Eichberg (1981).

⁴¹ On the following cf. Eichberg (1978), pp. 85–86, 109–116, 264–267 and same author (1981), pp. 167–171.

competition, through the exciting goal in soccer, the k.o. in boxing, the denouement of the mystery thriller or the Western show down. This thrilling k.o. exists neither in courtly fencing nor in the pencak silat. Both lacked the – theoretically possible – construction of hierarchical levels of mastery and of scored points (as were developed in modern sport-fencing as contributions towards the excitement of gradual elimination and final victory). – Again, the differences between pencak silat and courtly fencing appear only when one moves from a negative finding – the lack of thrill – to a positive structural finding.

7. In Baroque fencing as in the other aristocratic exercises and drills, it was – as shown – spatial orientation that stood against temporal excitement. This is not the case in pencak silat. Here, other signs of space-time-configuration are to be noticed which become even more apparent in other games related to pencak silat or surrounding it. In the cockfight, the importance of the social time has been described as "a radically atomistic structure. Each match is a world unto itself, a particulate burst of form. There is the match making, there is the betting, there is the fight, there is the result (...) and there is the hurried embarrassed passing of money. The looser is not consoled. (...) Nor are winners congratulated, or events rehashed. Once the match is ended the crowd's attention turns totally to the next, with no looking back. (...Here) the present is severed into a string of flashes, some more bright than others, but all of them disconnected, aesthetic quanta. Whatever the cockfight says, it says it in spurts. (...)

The Balinese live in spurts. Their life as they arrange it and perceive it, is less a flow, a directional movement out of the past, through the present, toward the future than an on-off pulsation of meaning and vacuity, an arhythmic alternation of short periods (...The cockfight is) Baltoese in the same way (... as) the clanging pointillism of gamelan-music (...)" [Geertz 1972].

So the social time of the Balinese cockfight is one of sequences⁴². This recurs in the sequential pointillism of the Malayan top – spinning game just as – under the conditions of modernization – in the pingpong pattern of the ball sports that have been imported from the West. Also, the Malayan dances and the wayang-games could be analyzed under this aspect. The latter make clear why non-European social time can not be meaningfully described under the negative aspect of something "missing" or "lacking" (for example, thrill). The wayang-game that seems "boring" or "unexciting" to the European because the excitement does not build up to the "incredible event" in the future is eagerly followed by the Javanese through the whole night, for up to ten hours. A sense of something "missing" or "lacking" comes from European expectations⁴³.

Here we have gained a preliminary insight into the configural patterns of courtly fencing and of pencak silat in their respective societies: The confrontation of strength and resistance stands in contrast to sidestepping and to the structure of relation. Social space is differently structured through institutions on the one hand and through the guru-murid relationship on the other. In the one case, social time was characterized by an increasing spatiality (that developed into a temporally dynamic, striving expectation of thrill in the industrial period), in the other case by sequences.

What conclusions can one draw?

What will be?

The differentiating configurations of European courtly fencing and the Indonesian pencak silat point to more than structures: They point to differentiated processes. Where to? That is the question that motivates us to deal with historical material. Now we can generalize

⁴² On sequences see also Nitschke (1975), pp. 39–68.

⁴³ On repetition and parallelism as characteristic of the practice and expectation of story telling in Nias see Marschall (1976), pp. 41–42, 95.

on three levels: on the differences of cultural processes, on the Indonesian process and on our own.

1. The path from the massive collisions of the medieval European tournament through the geometrical pattern of Baroque fencing to k.o.-oriented boxing is different from the path leading from the duel-free old Malayan game culture to the dance-like pencak silat. This variation was not arbitrary, but societal, rooted in the different configurations of social behavior. Therefore, an inference from these processes is in order: There is not one "modernization", "development", "progress" nor one "process of civilization" only. Instead of the unitary way that Moszkowski envisioned in 1900, there is a multitude of processes that can only be shown through configural comparison. The comparison of the European duel with the war cultures of Black Africa and its new boxing, figures, Idi Amin and Muhammed Ali, would once again lead to totally different results [Mazrui 1975]. Whatever these looked like, the time should be past when foreign cultures are placed on an imaginary time axis and categorized as "primitive", "backward", or "underdeveloped".

Unfortunately we are still in the midst of such ethnocentrism⁴⁴.

2. Thus, the Indonesian way can not be mapped from European history, not even in rough outline. It is different. If we want to know something about it, we must begin an intensive dialogue with this culture. And a development policy claiming to be able to help this country must be aware of the culture it seeks to develop. What development is mirrored in the history of duel and ballgames and its patterns of relation? What connection exists between them and the patterns of communication of the new administration, the problems of paternalism (bapakism) and corruption (korupsi) that have been brought about by modernization and are at the same time hindering it? To what extent is sport-development aid exporting our Western sports to Indonesia also contributing to the destruction of the native game-cultures, part of the larger attempt to bring "civilization" to Indonesia through Italian missionaries, German big money, British industries, and American TV-programmes? When a positive image of a foreign culture does not exist, the result of such "assistance" can only be alienation.

3. Such questions arise not only out of "sympathy" with the foreign culture (although this would be justified). They also arise from the quest for our own identity. Which way is Europe going? The intensive contact with the foreign is important because it gives rise to the questioning of our own culture. For this there is even more reason now because non-European fighting techniques like Jujutsu and Judo (and more recent Asian sports like Kung Fu, Taekwon-Do, and Viet Vo Dao, Thai boxing) are spreading through our culture. Together with East-Asian meditation techniques (Yoga) and Afro-American dances, they are about to transform our physical culture [Nitchke, Wickind 1981]. Configural, social-historical comparison is suitable to clarify the effects of such processes and to pose sharper questions. Are we now being "developed"?

– Are the Asian fighting techniques being transformed during the process of diffusion according to the pattern of our "rowdy and boxing culture"? It is possible that they are being pressed into configurations of strength and resistance, of achievement expectations and "progressive thrill" as Judo has been in tendency – since the beginning of the 20th century? Does nothing basic change then?

– Or was the boxing-culture of Nazism, combat sport in "Adolf-Hitler-schools" and "NS-Ordensburgen" [Orlow 1965; Scholz 1967; Kogel 1963] a sign of the end of the European "rowdy culture"? Does the strength-resistance pattern still have any meaning for the younger generation?

⁴⁴ Coronese Stefano (1973), *Una civiltà primitiva. Documentazione fotografica sulla civiltà primitiva del popolo Mentawaiano (Indonesia)*, Cremona. – Enrico Guidoni (1976), *Architektur der primitiven Kulturen*, Stuttgart-Mailand. Here, among others, the cultures of the Niassans, the Bataks and Miinangkabau are declared to be "primitive".

– And if it still does, could it be in this configuration of force against force that one power does not turn against the other any more, but against itself? With intense training in childhood, doping, hormone manipulation of young girls, and the appearance of anabolic steroids. [Jung, Pilz, Jessen 1978] European sports have reached a macabre peak and tend to self-destruction. This crisis of Olympic sports does not appear accidentally together with the understanding of the limits of economic growth and of industrial competition in the ecological collapse. Did the European duel turn into a battle against ourselves?

– Or different again: Is the civilization that we have built for centuries increasingly depriving us of the opportunities to develop our "rowdy-culture" in a sensuous way? Is sport on television not a weak substitute after all? Today, wrestling and boxing find their support in the "lower classes" [Lüschen 1963]; perhaps this is comparable to the withdrawal of popular folk sports, like wrestling, from the aristocratic exercises of the Ancien Régime is the desensualization of our strength-resistance-mania a basis for the current experiences of alienation?

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Przemoc przeciw przemocy: konfiguracje sztuk walki w kulturach Europy i Indonezji

Słowa kluczowe: sztuki walki, pencak silat, konfiguracje, kultura indonezyjska

Socjologia pozeuropejskich kultur sportowych napotyka szczególne trudności metodologiczne. Nauki społeczne zachodniego typu nie służą gotowymi możliwościami ujęcia kompleksu obcych struktur i nie mogą ich ujmować w ogólnych aspektach podstawowych kategorii. Z tego powodu w przypadku indonezyjskiej sztuki walki 'pencak silat' potrzebny jest odmienny interdyscyplinarny paradygmat, który umożliwi prowadzenie analiz konfiguracji w antropologii kulturowej (R. Benedict), w socjologii cywilizacji (N. Elias) i historycznym strukturalizmie (M. Foucault).

W ten sposób uzyskujemy spojrzenie na sztukę walki, która jest typowa dla indonezyjskiego społeczeństwa a pozostaje w ostrym kontraście wobec europejskiej szermierki i boksu. Poszczególne wzory ćwiczeń fizycznych odzwierciedlają różne tradycje i drogi społeczno-kulturowego rozwoju.

Nie można redukować całego bogactwa kulturowego do jednowymiarowych kierunków w historycznym rozwoju, w świetle których indonezyjskie formy jawią się jako 'archaiczne' lub 'średniowieczne'. Zwłaszcza, że żyjemy w czasach fascynacji azjatyckimi formami kultury fizycznej (karate, aikidō, taekwondo, tai chi chuan, joga), które rozwijają się w metropoliach przemysłowych. W ten sposób wątpliwa staje się kolonialna perspektywa nauki o ewolucjonizmie. Nie ma żadnej jednorodnej modernizacji.

(tłumaczenie i oprac. W.J.C.)