

# The Art of *Penca* and the Aesthetics from Holistic to Concentric

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## Abstract

The art of *Penca* is a cultural expression of Sundanese societies in West Java. *Penca* Art has been inherited from generation to generation either philosophically or practically. Philosophically is through the great values of humanities contained in the *patalékan-patalékan*, while practically is through various expressions of stances with particular names. This research uses qualitative method focusing on holistic and concentric perspectives inspired from macrosociology and microsociology theory. *Penca* Art as social reality is closely related to democratic aesthetics in which it is growing and developing. The aesthetics of *Penca* comprises the aesthetics of sound, movement, and visual.

**Keywords:** *Penca* Art, Holistic, Concentric, the aesthetics of *Penca*

## Introduction

There are conventionally two important types of sociology: micro sociology and macro sociology. Micro sociology investigates various patterns of thought and behavior from relatively small scaled groups. The people identifying themselves as micro sociologists are interested in various verbal and non-verbal communication in face-to-face social relationship, decision-making process by the judges, formation and integration of friendship group, and the influence of one's membership in a group toward his/her world vision<sup>1</sup>

The world of *Penca* Art, especially for the Sundanese society in West Java, exists as a lineage art which has been handed down from generation to generation since past times until nowadays. Sundanese people are known as people having various specific communication styles, either verbal or non-verbal especially in the pattern of social relations, for example in the patterns of *ngariung*, *ngaderes*, *ngawaris kabinangkitan* in *Penca* Art. Sundanese people understand that *Penca* Art contains various meanings such as, cultural meaning, education meaning, and artistic meaning.

The cultural meaning is covered when *Penca* Art has position, role, and function as an expression of Sundanese culture in learning noble values of Sundanese local wisdom such as *cageur* (healthy), *bageur* (kind), *bener* (honest), *pinter* (smart), *singer* (creative). The education meaning of *Penca* art contains moral ethic teachings to appreciate other people, to honor parents and teachers, not to be arrogant, and etc. as written in *patalékan* Cimandé. The artistic meaning of *Penca* Art includes in its arts either in the identity which is materialized or being. The materialized identity is shown by various *Penca* traditions in various places such as, the tradition of *Cimandé*, *Cikalong*, *Timbangan*, *Sabandar* and etc. *Penca* offers several stances and body movements, such as *Kuda-kuda*, *Jurus*, *Depok*, *Tomplok* and etc. (Rosidi, 2000: 508). The being identity is the developing process of novel stances and forms of performances of *Penca* Arts in accordance with its era.

Besides, *Penca* Art also has distinctive ways of inheritance, that is direct inheritance in *paguron-paguron* (places of learning *penca*), where the coaches teach *penca*, either *penca kembang* or *penca eusi*.<sup>2</sup> Face-to-face communication is always conducted between the pupils and their guru. They obey the principles of *paguron* and live as the heir of heir of *penca* art. The other inheritance is through the documentation of all *penca* traditions in the archive, documentary film, fiction film, and etc. Therefore, *Penca* Art can be inherited in accordance with the presents need.

## Penca in the Holistic View

*Penca* Art is a cultural expression of Sundanese society, West Java. As generally known *Penca* art is also called as *Pencak Silat* (kind of martial arts) spreading throughout Indonesia. The supporting society is ethnic people having certain specific cultures. Sundanese people in West Java acknowledge *Pencak Silat* as *Penca* art comprising some traditions, they are *Cimandé*, *Cikalong*, *Timbangan*, *Sabandar*, etc. The naming of the tradition is based on the place where it is originally from.

*Penca* of Cimandé tradition is a system. It is since martial art of *Penca* has parts that can be differentiated

<sup>1</sup> The quote is intentionally written as an introduction which inspires this writing about *Penca* and Aesthetics. Quoted from a book entitled *Makro Sosiologi: Sebuah Pendekatan Terhadap Realitas Sosial* by Stephen K. Sanderson (2010: 2).

<sup>2</sup> *Penca kembang* is considered as basic movements, while *Penca eusi* is considered as inner movements including attitude phases, such as *patalékan*, *fasting*, etc. *Penca kembang* attracts others in the first intention of learning *Penca*, moreover after being accompanied by *Kendang penca* and *tarompét* (trumpet) which is harmonic. There are children and teenagers who are interested in *Penca kembang* which is also considered as *ibing penca* (penca dance).

but cannot be separated. The parts of the martial systems are: philosophy, strategy, tactic and technique (Fadilakusumah, 2016: 59). However, in this case there is one more thing that is not discussed by Fadilakusumah, namely, aesthetics. He does not cover the aesthetic in his dissertation, in fact *Penca* and *aesthetic* are interesting points but are rarely discussed.

*Penca* art can be considered as indigenous knowledge that is owned by every Sundanese people, thus it is also called as lineage arts. Meaning that it is handed down from generation to generation in evolutive ways, either philosophically or practically.

The philosophical meant is the existence of noble values of humanities, that is, to be a true human or *Pendekar*. *Pendekar* is a title for a *Penca* person inheriting *penca art* and maintaining the values of his *pendekar* consisting in *patalékan-patalékan*. *Patalékan* is various promises or vows which should be fulfilled. Meanwhile, *patalékan* in *Cimandé* tradition means a loyal vow of a pupil to keep maintaining the values of *talék cimandé* as long as his life. The vow is delivered in a form of *talék* pledge in *patalékan* ritual (Winata, 2016: 65). All pupils who have conducted *patalékan* must maintain their *Cimandé pendekar* characters wherever they are as long as they are alive. The humanities values in the *patalékan* shows that to be true human or *pendekar* (Winata, 2016: 65), one needs a strong commitment toward live values for his/her safety in live.

*Penca* art as Sundanese cultural expressions has become a collective representation through the *paguron-paguron* of *Penca* spreading in West Java, out of Java, and in fact in overseas. The *paguron-paguron* becomes a kind of “meeting point” for any people coming from any places to be a disciple of *Penca* guru (coach) and later to be a good *Pendekar*. *Penca* art has two distinctive categories, that is, *penca* as a martial art called *eusi* (content) known as *pencak silat* and *kembang* (flower) known as *ibing penca*. Thus, there also people consider *penca silat* not as martial art or a kind of self-defence but as *ibing penca* (Raspuji, 2011).

Raspuji finds that the term *ibing penca* is from West Java, and literally it is translated into *Pencak* dance. However, Raspuji also sees that leading figures of *pencak silat* disagree that *ibing penca* is considered as *Pencak dance*. That is because dance focuses on the dance elements in which is an art that focuses on the beauty of the movement although the movement is taken from the elements of *pencak silat*. While *ibing penca* focuses on the elements of *pencak silat*, that is, a movement functions as self-defense although still has the beauty elements. The different perspective is also because the way of how the supporting society of *penca* thinks. Their perspective can be different because of their background and the *pikukuh paguron*, for example, *ibing penca* Cikalong (one area in Cianjur regency) which is initiated by the *pendekar* of *pencak silat art*. In fact, there is also *ibing penca* which is accompanied by musical instrument *Kecapi*. The different perspective is actually comprehended by the Sundanese and there is no problem about that.

The world of *penca* acknowledges two terms, they are *penca kembang* and *penca eusi*. *Penca kembang* offers the variety of basic movements to perform as beautiful and simple movement to follow by any people who wants to learn *penca*. *Penca eusi* is advance movements which are more complicated than *penca kembang*. *Penca eusi* is known as martial art functions for self-defence not for fight.

*Penca kembang* is relatively easier to do and usually accompanied by *Kéndang Péncá*. *Kéndang Péncá* is a set of traditional musical instrument consisting of *Kéndang* and *Tarompét*. *Penca kembang* is also known from the terms *tepak dua* and *tepak tilu*, *paleredan*, *golempang* and *padungdung*. It is also closely related to *tepakán Kéndang Penca* and *Tarompét* as well as *kempul* which have been codified from generation to generation in the Sundanese society until now. It also includes Sundanese *menak* (noble class) (Fadilakusumah, 2016: 60). *Penca* among the Sundanese *menak* was an art enjoyed as entertainment (*kalangénan* atau *kaulinan*). *Ibing penca* is indeed beautiful which can be seen from its beautiful hand movement, firm stances, and the enjoyment that is hardly imagined without experiencing it directly. This can make a beginner keeps loving and adoring Sundanese *Penca* more and more.

### Penca in the Concentric View

Concentric view means centered and focused on the specific issue, which is the aesthetic of *penca*. Is there any *penca* aesthetic? An artwork will be indeed beautiful when the artist already gives what he wants to his artwork (Chernyshevsky, 2002: 14). The artists of *penca* art who develop creating *ibing penca* contributes their best to what is imaged beautiful according to the need of aesthetic expression of the *penca* artists.

The picture of *ibing penca* in the world of *penca* can be portrayed as follows.

“*Tuntas nyawer ditema ku pating beledug jeung borobot sora tetekoan/merecon, pepetasan, kohkol bajidor dititirkeun, ditema ku padungdung kendang penca, dog dog reog ditatabeuh kebo jirokeun, dipirig ku teretet sora tarompét, eundeur handaruan ka indit*”<sup>3</sup>

(“after spreading money there is sound of continuous explosion from various kinds of firecrackers, *kentongan* (wooden drum) and continued by the accompaniment of *tepakán kendang penca*, beaten by *kebojiro*, followed

<sup>3</sup> The quote is a picture of the condition of *penca* art in 1940s in one of the areas in Garut West Java in a celebration of circumcision portrayed by Uzun Rustandi (Mangle, no 1719).

by *trumpet sounds*, crowd dancing here and there to go immediately”)

The stresses are on the bold quote, that is, “*padungdung kendang penca*” and “*teretet sora tarompel*”. Both show part of *penca* art containing the aesthetic of sound. *Padungdung* is initially directed to the rhythm of *kendang* accompanying *penca* movements which get faster. It means then to increase the speed of working to complete soon (Rosidi, 2000: 471). Besides, in *kendang penca* there is also *Golémpang*, a beat of *kendang* with fast rhythm as accompanying fast *penca* stances. In this moment, the *silat* master shows his skill and agility in performing his stances. He fights challenging his opponent. If there is one coming to the fighting arena, the *silat* master gives sign to be played a faster *padungdung* (Rosidi, 2000: 248).



Figure 1: *Kendang Penca Sunda*, the aesthetic of the sound is so attractive  
(Doc. Arthur S Nalan, 2017)

*Penca* art cannot be separated from the role of *waditra* (musical instrument) of *tarompel penca*. *Tarompel penca* is a wind instrument with seven holes, on the pole there is coconut shell in a crescent shaped, the end of the funnel is cone shaped. One of *waditra Kendang penca*, *Reog*, and *Angklung buncis*; is made of wood (Rosidi, 2000: 649). *Penca* performance is not complete without the accompaniment of *kendang penca* having songs such as: *kidung buah kawung*, *kembang gadung*, *ayun ambing*, *polos*, and etc. which are usually called as fighting song by the elder figures of *Penca*. *Tarompel penca* is strictly forbidden to play love song (Fadilakusumah, 2016: 82). Besides, there is a song which used to be very famous in *Penca art*, that is, *Kembang beureum* (a red flower). This song is very typical for *Penca art*.

Beside having the sound aesthetic resembling *kendang penca* and the trumpet, *Penca art* also has the aesthetic of kinetic. The aesthetic of kinetic is the beauty of *penca* movements called *Penca* stances. There are two different views related to these stances; the first defines stance as the motive of trestle and the other defines movement motive such as beating, kicking, and etc. They are then integrated in one continuous movement, usually in the one stance *ibing* movement. It is a continuous movement adjusted to *tepak kendang* (hitting *kendang*) and to the sound of *kempul*. In this perspective, stances are given number in order, such as the first stance, the second, and so on until the end of the *ngibing* performance or demonstration (Rosidi, 2000: 313). The aesthetic of kinetic means related to the movement. The movement in *penca* is known as *jurus* (stance) as explained by Raspuji (2011):

Generally, the attitude and movement in *ibing penca* are more opened, more distilled and conducted in a metrical rhythm. *Ibing Penca* in West Java has a general choreographic pattern, they are: (1) the first part: *Tepak Dua* or *Paleredan*, shows more beauty elements; (2) the second part: *Tepak Tilu* or *Golempang* shows techniques of self-defense which is still tied to the beat of rhythm; (3) the third part: *Padungdung*, here the *silat* master



improvised freely in accordance with his imagination at the moment. Based on the choreography, *ibing pencak* is one of arts which is rich of creativity since respective *silat* schools (*perguruan*) possesses different *ibing penca* although tied to the same rhythm. No wonder then *ibing penca* becomes the most famous dance having many lovers in West Java. The choreography of *ibing penca* is related a lot to the stances of the tradition which is divided into two parts. Raspuji (2011) states that:

The first part choreography is usually really closed to the stances coming from Cimande tradition. It is because the characteristic of the movement is more opened so that it can be played in a slower tempo. For example, *Tepak Dua Salancar*, *Tepak Dua Sorong Dayung*, *Tepak Dua Buang Kelid*, *Tepak Dua Kampung Baru*, *Paleredan Jalak Pengkor*, *Paleredan Sawitan*, *Palere and Pancer Opat*. The second part choreography is derived mostly from Cikalong tradition, Sabandar, and Sera. For example: *Tepak Tilu Cikalong*, *Tepak Tilu Jalan Muka*, *Tepak Tilu Alip Bandul*, *Tepak Tilu Peunggasan*, *Tepak Tilu Gerak Seta*. Then the third part choreography shows *jurus kajadian* (application stance) showing techniques of attack and defense conducted in the real speed of which in the beginning development period more on improvisation. However, *padungdung* rhythm nowadays is played by the movement previously determined, not improvisation. For example: *Si Pecut*, *Pecah Alip*, *Pecah Gunting*, *Likuran*, *Si Pitung*.



Figure 2: *Ibing Penca* which is performed by two female teenagers, It shows the movement aesthetic attracting their spectators because of the beautiful movement.

(Doc. Arthur S. Nalan, 2017)

The study shows that the naming of the stances is closely related to the context of local language (Sundanese language) which is only understood by the Sundanese. Moreover, it seems impossible to be translated either into Indonesian or English, because of the distinctive local identity.

The aesthetic as a study of beauty enables the researcher to observe the aesthetic values. *Penca* has the aesthetic of sound, movement, and visual. The visual aesthetic which becomes distinctive is the suit of black *kampret* and *pangsi*, wide trousers without pocket made of silk, saten, or thin cloth. This suits are previously worn by *Jawara*, *pendekar* or *silat* master either for fight or a trip. Loose *Pangsi* enables those who wear can move freely, especially when moving feet to kick or *depok*. The loose part in the waist make it able to be fold. The *pangsi* trousers are usually black or blue (Rosidi, 2000: 492). The suit is also completed with *iket* (head band) with various names such as *barangbang sempak*, *parekos nangka*, *barongsong kelong*, *kebo modol*, etc. *Penca* art can be visualized in the picture below.



Figure 3: *Ibing Penca* which is performed by a kid showing the visual aesthetic from the dress and the head band. (Doc. Arthur S. Nalan, 2017)

### Conclusion

*Penca* art is Sundanese cultural expression which has been handed down from generation to generation until nowadays. *Penca* Art has materialized identity and being identity because of the dynamic of its development. The noble humanities values in *patalékan* Cimandé becomes a commitment of a *pendekar* to maintain and protect it as a lineage inheritance.

The noble values contained in *patalekan* Cimandé can also be considered as a tangible cultural inheritance to the world, including the aesthetics of the sound, movement, and the visual. This writing recommends that Sundanese *Penca* can significantly enrich the proposal of *Pencak Silat* Indonesia to UNESCO since the values behind the real form that is the humanities values, especially the values in *Patalekan* Cimandé.

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