Blessings, Bone Setting and the Blood of the Ancestors

Introduction

In the highlands to the south of Jakarta, on the outskirts of Bogor, sits the village of Cimande. The area's cool climate is a welcome break from the heat of the plains below, and once made Bogor a pleasant hillside retreat for the Dutch colonial administration. The area is a watershed and the verdant growth of the tea and coffee plantations that blanket the surrounding slopes provide abundant testimony to the fecundity of the soil. Cimande, however, is a centre of far more than agricultural production. It is the spiritual home of the style of Pencak Silat which takes its name from the area, the aliran Cimande (Fig. 4).

Of the many different schools and styles of Pencak Silat in Indonesia, Cimande is perhaps the most well-known. IPSI recognizes some 800-odd styles of Pencak Silat, and of these styles two, Cimande and silek Tuo, are considered to be the oldest, and the main sources of Pencak Silat as found in Indonesia today. West Java and West Sumatra, the two regions from where these styles originate, are commonly held to be the birthplaces Pencak Silat. In West Sumatra, Pencak Silat is referred to locally as silek and is inseparable from performance traditions particular to the people of the region, the Minangkabau (Harun n.d.; Holt 1972; Kartomi 1981; Nor 1986; Pauka 1998). Those who train in the art in West Sumatra do so as a means of self-defence in order to protect themselves when travelling abroad (merantau), and many different aliran exist throughout the Minangkabau region (Cordes 1990; Ratu 1952; Saleh 1985). Similarly in West Java penca is both a fighting system and a performance art and held to be integral to conceptions of Sundanese ethnicity. For its part, IPSI acknowledges the importance of these two styles, Cimande and silek Tuo (literally ‘old silat’), to the development of the standardized system of modern Pencak Silat, which, according to Eddie Nalapraya, took as its point of reference these two aliran (Nalapraya 1992: 6). In accordance with the historical narrative that underpins the progression of Pencak Silat into a modern sport under the auspices of IPSI, regional practices are held to be the wellspring of tradition from which the modern art sprang. IPSI is thus both the inheritor and custodian of the national cultural heritage of Pencak Silat. Yet the authoritative claims made to the representation of Pencak Silat at national level belie...
FIGURE 4  Map of Cimande Village