

# Filipino Martial Arts

Digest

## PHILIPPINE HEALING ARTS

Special Edition  
2007

Gat Puno Abon "Garimot" Baet

Virgil J. Mayor Apostol



**Publisher**

Steven K. Dowd

**Contributing Writers**

Stuart-X-Change

Virgil J. Mayor Apostol

Gat Puno Abon “Garimot” Baet

Ancient Publishing House, Batangas City

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The FMA Digest is published quarterly. Each issue features practitioners of martial arts and other internal arts of the Philippines. Other features include historical, theoretical and technical articles; reflections, Filipino martial arts, healing arts and other related subjects.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this digest are those of the authors or instructors being interviewed and are not necessarily the views of the publisher or editor.

We solicit comments and/or suggestions. Articles are also welcome.

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## **From the Publishers Desk**

### **Kumusta**

The FMA Digest was once requested to put out an issue about the healing arts of the Philippines. Of course in reply the FMA Digest requested if that person could help in the research, and of course nothing was heard from that person again.

Well, it took sometime but the FMA Digest finally has come up with a Special Edition on the Healing Arts of the Philippines. Through some help from Virgil J. Mayor Apostol, who I had the pleasure of meeting while living in San Diego in the 90's and must be noted that his work in this issue is copyrighted and may only be used for personal collection, otherwise Mr. Apostol must be contacted for permission of use, this includes the writing and also the pictures. He has a forthcoming book that will be a collectors item, so it is suggested when it comes out get it. Mr. Apostol currently holds his practice on the island of O'ahu, Hawaii and in southern California.

Gat Puno Abon "Garimot" Baet known for the Garimot System of Arnis de Mano, Buno and Hilot also provided his knowledge to this Special Edition. Gat Puno Baet has supplied articles for the FMA Digest in the past and is a very knowledgeable individual and is a very impressionable person to meet in person. And it should be noted that if you ever get the opportunity to attend one of his seminars 'Do Not Hesitate'.

To round out the issue some information from Stuart-X-Change and the book "Hilot-Ancient Therapy of the Philippines" published in 2001, by the Ancient Publishing House, Batangas City, Philippines.

So enjoy and gain knowledge about the alternative medicine of the Philippines.

**Maraming Salamat Po**

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## Introduction



A study of alternative medicine in the Philippines is, inevitably, a study of the origins of its people and the amalgam of cultures and influences: Centuries of Spanish colonial rule and the indelible consequences of its religion, hundreds of years of trade with China and assimilation of its healing arts, tribal and provincial diversities with its profusion of folklore and mythologies, all redounding into the Filipino's easy disposition for superstitions and the allure for the esoteric, mystical, and fringe.

Certainly, western medicine prevails - in the metropolitan areas, with its heart centers and hospitals plush with the accoutrements of modern medicine, in the provincial capitals and cities equipped with the diagnostic machineries essential for the commerce of mainstream medicine. But for the majority of the rural poor - including the urban-suburban poor - there are the chronic crippling economic disabilities that make mainstream health care unaffordable, often accessed only as a debt-inducing last resort.

For so many in the rural areas, health and healing are consigned and relegated to alternative forms of treatment: hand-me-down herbal concoctions or some form of rural alchemy; prayer-based folkloric therapies; a visit to the faith healer; a consultation with the albularyo or hilot with their bagful of indigenous modalities, dispensing treatments often spiced with a bulong, orasyon or occasional doses of pharmacy-based therapies.

The frequent use of the hilot skilled in chiropractic manipulations and the albularyo (herbolario, village healer) with his bagful of indigenous modalities; the rural folk with their hand-me-down familiarity with the use of wild-crafted herbal medicines and the self-prescribed pharmacotherapy, most notably the use of the "magasawang gamot." One might see them with small patches of papers scribed with esoteria of pig-latin prayers pasted or taped on ailing parts (orasyon). Or after having tried a variety of herbal medicines, pounded, decocted, or infused, they will seek "second opinion" from the local medico or the provincial physician who might prescribe some affordable mainstream treatment. Often, finding no relief, they will return to their wild-crafted alternatives or seek another consultation with the albularyo who will dispense a second dose of herbs, bulong or orasyon.

And they are not all rural-based. There is a separate bagful of urban-based therapeutic alternatives accessed by the rich and burgis: imported herbals and unapproved pharmaceuticals, cyber mongered tonics and ephemeral snake oils, Chinese herbal alternatives, acupuncture, magnets, crystals, pranic healing and other new-age fringe.

Indeed, a study of alternative medicine in the Philippines is a window to the complex and fascinating Filipino psyche, its cultures and folklore, laden with religion and superstitions, with its motley of saints and disease-inducing mythological creatures - kapre, tikbalang, nuno, asuwang and mangkukulam - all contributing to a unique system of health care beliefs.

## **Hierarchy of Healers and Specialists in Philippine Folk Medicine**

In the hierarchy of healers and specialists in Philippine folk medicine, the albularyo may be referred to as the "general practitioners. Although knowledgeable in the other folkloric modalities, the albularyo is specially versed in the use of medicinal herbs. The hilot ambiguously refers both to the manghihilot and magpapaanak. The manghihilot - masahista, masseur - specializes in techniques and treatments applicable to sprains, fractures and musculoskeletal conditions. The magpapaanak, besides prenatal visits and delivering babies, often performs the suob ritual. Some healers limit their practice of folkloric therapies to more specialized modalities. The mangluluop specializes in diagnostic techniques, usually referring the patients after diagnosis to the albularyo, medico, or manghihilot for definitive treatments. The medico is a further specialization, merging age-old folkloric modalities with ingredients of western medicine - 'prescription' medications, acupuncture, etc. Most of these healers consider their healing craft as God-given, a calling from a supernatural being, and consequently, their healing practices with are profusely infused with prayers and religious rituals. Although their patient-base is rural, they are also present in the urban and suburban communities, albeit in small scattered niches serving burgis alternative needs, the impoverished or the transplanted rural folk.

### **The Albularyo**

In the rural areas, by tradition and because of chronic economic constraints, the albularyos are the general practitioners, the primary dispensers of health care. As with the other healers, there is usually a history of a healer in the family-line and their healing considered a "calling," a power or ability bestowed by a supernatural being, often, attributed to the Holy Spirit. Often lacking in formal education, his skills are based on and honed from hand-me-down practices and lore, with a long period of understudy or apprenticeship with a local healer. Years of patience and study bring the healer into a familiarity with the lore and rituals of healing, the prayers, and the use of herbal medicinal plants. Some acquire an expertise in the art of pulse taking and diagnosis.

In a country with numerous and diverse ethnic communities, the dissimilarities in healing practices come as no surprise. The albularyos minister to rural communities with animistic and mythological ethos, profoundly differing from region to region. In the southern Tagalog areas, the mythological landscape is populated by dwarfs, nunos, lamang lupas, tikbalangs and kapres - creatures that often complicate the conundrum of pathophysiology.

Consequently, many of the albularyos diagnostic rituals (tawas, luop) and treatment modalities (tapal, lunas, kudlit, pang-kontra, bulong, orasyon) are affected by the belief in these creatures and to the maladies they cause: na-nuno, na-dwende, na-lamang-lupa.

In the northern mountain ethnic communities, the albularyo may still be the general provider of folkloric health care and the hilot a familiar specialist and treatment modality. But the mythological creatures differ; the kapre and the tikblang are amusing details of the Tagalog imagination. As they perform the "kanyaw" to drive away the evil spirits. As they place great trust in their specialist, the "mambonong" who performs the "boni" ritual, slaughtering pigs in search of the right kind of "liver" to use for treatment.

Common to the healers is a fervent religiosity, guiding them in their healing practices, profusely infused with good doses of prayers - whispered (bulong) or written (orasyon). Although most are available for daily consultations, some practice their craft only on Tuesdays and Fridays, days of the week coinciding with the feast of the Sto. Niño and the feast of the Black Nazarene, when they believe their healing powers to be at their optimum.

### **The Hilot**

In the rural areas, a "Hilot" ambiguously refers to both the midwife (magpapaanak) and the chiropractic practitioner (manghihilot, masahe).

### **The Manghihilot**

In the alternative context, the hilot is a practitioner (or the practice) of the craft of 'chiropractic' manipulation and massage for the diagnosis and treatment of musculoligamentous and musculoskeletal ailments. In contrast to its western counterpart, the hilot's chiropractic treatment is low on science, high on esotery. Usually, hilot is a specialization, but in isolated rural areas, many of the albularyos have a familiarity in the use of this modality.

Most hilots, however, do not have any formal education or training. Other than a breech birth in some that is believed to destine or dispose one to this healing art, most rural hilots achieve their skills through an indigenous hand-me-down education.

The chiropractic skill can be imparted to a few chosen villagers deemed by the medico or 'ermitanya' (high priestess) to possess such potential capabilities. These 'ordained' hilots are not versed in the practice of other forms of alternative therapies and their practice is limited only to bodily complaints amenable to chiropractic manipulations and massage. And while the albularyos 'hilot' practices are aided by a whole bagful of indigenous tools (tawas, bulong, lunas, 'empowered' coconut oil, etc), the 'ordained' hilot's tools are meager: an amulet, an 'empowered' cane, or a nazarene-garb entrusted by the teacher and used during the healing sessions and a few diagnostic rituals.

Numerous techniques exist, varying by region and folkloric esoteria. Common in the practice of hilot in the rural areas is the practitioner's attribution of the healing effect to God, that it is through His guidance that they are able to manipulate the spiritual and energy channels, hoping to expel evil spirits that may have invaded the patient's etheric space and may have caused the physical ailments. One ancient technique of massage utilizes symbolic patterns of the cross, crown of thorns, the rosary, and the nailed hands and feet.

A common diagnostic procedure to determine the presence or site of malady or "sala" is the "panghihila." After gently massaging coconut oil over the areas of concern, the "panghihila" is performed using a mirror, a strip of cigarette cellophane paper, or a strip of banana frond. Any of these is passed over the body areas. If the material, instead of being pulled smoothly, sticks to a specific spot, this is presumed to be an area of malady - "sala," strain or muscle pull, and the massage directed to this area. (One massage treatment option is bintusa.) The treatment is usually supplemented with wrappings of medicinal leaves.

A few practitioners achieve an expertise in this healing modality, incorporating it with elements of "science" (meridians, trigger points, reflexology, basic anatomy and

physiology), gaining knowledge through self-study, and membership in a local group with shared interests or barangay workshops.

Alas, in the unrestricted and unsupervised practice of hilot in the rural areas, there are still many unfortunate outcomes: delayed diagnosis of serious maladies and many occasions of attempting complicated fracture reductions without radiographic imaging resulting in non-union, often life-time, deformities.

Like the albularyo, the hilot's services are "free-of-charge"; fearing that set fees will lessen the hilot's healing powers abilities. Voluntary donations are accepted: Pesos 10 to 100 or in kind - cigarettes, snacks, etc.

### **The Magpapaanak**

The magpapaanak are more popularly referred to as "hilot," a designation confusingly shared with the 'chiropractic' manghihilot. Not uncommonly, the calling comes from a family-line of hilots, and the training usually gotten from a trained practitioner who was a relative, friend or neighbor. Some become a "hilot" because of a spiritual calling, or a message from a supernatural being that grants the hilot the needed power and skills.

The magpapaanak has more than a basic knowledge in herbal medicinal plants, utilizing them in a variety of prenatal needs and postnatal care. Prenatal care starts about the fifth month, the patient followed up every two weeks or as often as needed to assess the progress and fetal position. Any perceived problem is referred early on.

Although the midwives are required to be certified and register annually at the municipal hall, there is no strict enforcement of certification. Quite often, in impoverished communities, deliveries are performed by friends, neighbors or relatives who have gained experience, confidence and the basic expertise in umbilical cord care, albeit uncertified. Too, they often have the basic knowledge on postpartum care and massage, and the use of medicinal herbs for the ritual of suob.

For a sundry of signs by the infant, like unusual amount of crying or restlessness, not uncommonly attributed to unpleasant entities and spirits. The midwife might take on the task of "pagbubuhos," a pre-baptismal ritual of water application or immersion performed on some infants while awaiting the sacramental church ritual.

### **The Medico**

Occasionally, an albularyo furthers his training, assimilates and adopts new skills and "expertise," merging folkloric therapies with mainstream medicine, incorporating allopathic treatment modalities like acupuncture, injection medications and prescription pharmaceuticals into his practice. Usually, there is a period of understudy or assistantship with a traditional healer from whom is gleaned the traditional elements that are eventually merged with the alternative.

But, alas, the pharmaceuticals, often as antibiotics and analgesics - even steroids - are empirically utilized by the medicos and dangerously added to the management of complicated maladies, prescribed indiscriminately and dispensed without the usual warnings and precautions as to adverse reactions and side effects.

Unfortunately, the use of prescription-type medicines advised or written by alternative healers with hardly a modicum knowledge of pharmacology has been increasing. Compounding this, many drug stores or "boticas" especially in the provincial

areas even some sari-sari stores! dispense prescription-type pharmaceuticals written or advised by the albularyo.

### **The Diviners and Procedures**

Alternative medicine is replete with a diverse array of rituals used to divining or diagnosing illnesses and maladies. The regional and ethnic variations are many. In some areas, divining is in the purview of the specialist, who does not treat unless the need is emergent, who refers the treatment to the appropriate specialist. However, most healers, if the cause of the illness is unclear or if the pulse-taking fails to suggest a clear cause, would readily utilize a ritual or indigenous diagnostic procedure: luop, hila, or tawas. The diagnostic paraphernalia varies according to the method or ritual used.

### **The Mangluluop**

The mangluluop is a specialist that determines the cause of an illness through the ritual of luop. This differs from the healing ritual of luop that is used for gastrointestinal complaints caused the inhalation of unpleasant odors.

The ritual paraphernalia consists of the kalanghuga (a kind of freshwater or saltwater shell), salt (to weaken the supernatural spirits), benditang palaspas (piece of blessed palm leaves from Palm Sunday), charcoal made from a coconut shell, a coconut midrib and a tin plate. After sequenced fiery concoction of these elements is made on a tin plate, in consonance with prayers and invocations and performing the sign-of-the-cross thrice over the patient, the kalanghuga is examined. The diagnosis is suggested by its appearance: Roughness, a slight affliction; stickiness, a sprain; a figure or form (hugis-hugis), a displeased environmental spirit; brittleness, a really angered spirit. The treatment is then suggested and the necessary alternative referral made.

After the diagnostic ritual, the shell is powdered, and with this, while praying, a sign-of-the-cross is performed on the patient's forehead, both palms and plantar arches of both feet. Then, the ritual paraphernalia are thrown under the entrance stairs to prevent the evil spirits from reentering the house.

### **The Manghihila**

Panghihila is a diagnostic procedure oft used by the manghihilot. The paraphernalia vary: plain strips of paper, strips of cigarette cellophane covers, mirrors and strips of banana leaves. Prior to the diagnosing procedure, the material may be impregnated or smoothed with coconut oil that might have been empowered with prayers (bulong). Coconut oil is also gently massaged over the affected area. The material is lightly placed on the surface of the area or complaint and pulled some distance, lifted, and replaced again on the adjoining area. If the strip of material sticks to the surface, resisting the pull, this area is assumed to be an area of affliction, usually a pulled muscle or sprain (sala). Therapeutic massage is then performed. Bintusa is an alternative.

### **The Mangtatawas**

Tawas is a popular diagnostic ritual performed by most alternative healers that serves in providing clues as to the nature and cause of the illness. Pagtatawas originally derived its name from to its chemical nature - alum, an astringent, crystalline double



sulfate of aluminum and potassium - and early on, was used exclusively in the diagnostic ritual.

Today, tawas refers to a diagnostic ritual or procedure, utilizing a variety of materials: candles, eggs, mirrors, plain paper, cigarette rolling-paper, and alum.

### **Faith Healers**

In the hierarchy of Philippine alternative healers, faith healers belong to a separate category of 'specialization.' Their numbers are uncertain. A spiritist group in the Philippines - the Union Espiritista Christiana de Filipinas - has an estimated 10,000 members trained in mediumistic-healing scattered throughout the Philippines

However, the rural landscape is replete of stories of healers, saved from illness or death into sudden epiphanies to a healing craft, practicing in relative anonymity or hesitant burgeoning fame, their renown spreading through the grapevine of the rural faithful.

Some started their healing craft as albularyos, medicos or hilots. Although their healing ways differ, they share an attribution of their healing power to a higher being - often, a gift bestowed on them by the Holy Spirit; or, that they are merely healing mediums of the Holy Spirit. Most remembers a divine encounter, a mystical experience, or in their childhood or early adult life, a spiritual possession or being "entered" by a being, and a life thereafter, being guided into the path of healing.

On one end of the spectrum of faith healers, there are those like the albularyos, manghihilots and other healers, their healing rituals replete with ingredients of religiosity, icons, prayers and invocations, using the same divining ways of tawas and luop, diagnosing black elves, evil spirits, possessions and sorcery as causes of maladies, dispensing their fringe concoctions of treatments.

On the other end are the faith healers practicing on the fringe: the psychic healers, healing at the distance; the healers whispering and blowing prayers to the diseased areas; healers anointing the body's with flowers dipped in coconut oil infused with prayers; healers anointing the diseased areas with their own saliva; healers passing icons or crucifixes over the body. But from whatever end of the spectrum, it exacts some degree of faith . . . a modicum to a martyrdom of faith.

And to this group of healers belong the psychic surgeons, those who perform bare-handed surgery, without the traditional surgical accoutrements. And, they are but a small number; perhaps, over a hundred, and a mere handful, considered "outstanding."



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## Healing Arts of the Philippines

By Virgil J. Mayor Apostol, HHP

Revised version of original featured in *Bamboo Girl* – #9 / 2000 Millennium Issue; *Filipinas Magazine* – vol. 10 no. 109; *Rapid Journal* vol. 5 no. 3; *The Filipino Martial Arts* – vol. 2 no. 6; *Filipino Press* – May-July 1999; and on the websites: *Jade Dragon Online*; *Metamind*, *Adobo*, and *Asia Pacific Universe*. Derived from Apostol's forthcoming book on traditional Filipino healing. Copyright © 1999.

Manual medicine in the Philippines is a tradition as old as its first inhabitants on the islands. Known in the local languages and dialects as *Hilot* or *Hilut* (Tagalog, Dumagat, Manobo, Bicolano, Visayan), *Aplos* (Bontoc), *Aptus* (Ivatan), *Unar* (Kalinga), *Kemkem* (Pangasinan), *Ilot* or *Ilut* (Ilocano, Itawis, Zambal, Pampango), *Ilu* (Ibanag), *Ilat* (Isneg) *Elot* (Ilongot), *Agod* or *Agud* (Maguindanaon, Maranao), and *Hagud* (Bukidnon), just to name a few. *Ablon* (Northern Ilocano) is part of the traditional folk medicine that has survived the ages.

There are various specialties of a folk doctor (*arbolario*) such as the practitioner of *Ablon* or *Ilut* (*mangablun* or *mangngilut*), herbalist (*mangngagas*), bonesetter (*mammullo*), midwife (*partera*), and other specialists such as snake- or animal-bite curer



Filipino traditional form of manual medicine is beneficial for various conditions.

Photo Copyright © 2000 | Virgil Apostol

(*mannuma*) and shaman or spiritual healer (*mangngallag*). Yet all of these practices have their roots common to the healing modalities of other Southeast Asian countries including those of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, as well as those of the Pacific Islands.

Lying just above the equator, the Philippines is situated in the Pacific Ocean, north of Indonesia, east of Vietnam, and south of Taiwan. A tropical climate is endured with a cooler dry season from March through June, and a wet season the rest of the year.

Filipinos belong to the Austric stock of peoples that inhabit an area extending from Madagascar off the coast of East Africa, to Easter Island in the Pacific Ocean. There are even those who believe that the Philippines was once part of the ancient continent of Lemuria or Mu that was swallowed up by the Pacific Ocean long before Atlantis was in the Atlantic Ocean.

As the natives migrated into the three major islands - Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, with them came their animistic beliefs and customs. Assimilation through migration and trade was the influence of Hindu-Malayan and Islamic-Malayan cultures via the islands to the south, as well as European influence after the Spanish conquest, a domain that lasted over 300 years since the 16th century. Thus, practices from a conglomeration of sciences, religions, arts, and medical practices, are still evident

throughout the islands. Prevalent is a spirituality that oversees the etymology or diagnosis of an illness.

On a metaphysical level, sickness may have various causes such as the disturbing of spirits such as the result of *nakadalapus* – when one has encountered a malevolent or ancestral spirit, or even when cutting down a tree without asking permission of the spirit dweller. In such cases, an animistic ritual food offering (*atang*) along with prayer (*kararag*) or Latin *oracion* (incantation) is one measure. For healers versed in the physical arts, manual medicine is also initiated to help drive away any spirit that may have lodged itself in the etheric level of its victim. By driving away the spirit, it is believed that the patient would get well.



In the Filipino mind exists a perspective of harmony between physical and metaphysical realms. Apostol receives spiritual energy from medium protector Avelina Ocampo. Manaoag Pangasinan. Photo Copyright © 2000 | Virgil Apostol

An indigenous concept of a hot-cold syndrome, found in various countries, plays an important role in how nature affects the human body. For example, a tropical condition can heat the body, thus opening the pores and causing the body to sweat. Wind (*angin*) then blows on the body and cools the sweat, its coldness transferring into the body. If not attended to, a disruption of the natural internal balance occurs. Vitality may eventually weaken and cause the body to become susceptible to sickness. This is why parents make sure their children are kept dry and covered, especially if there is a breeze since the pores are considered open.

Similarly, after one has undergone any strenuous activity such as working hard in the fields or playing sports, the body is understood to be hot. But one who takes a cold bath shortly after risks the possibility of impairing the physiological activity that the body is currently in, plunging it abruptly from hot to cold which can contribute to a weakening state. But whatever the case, the healer advises the patient not to bathe after receiving a treatment or after any strenuous activities because the body has undergone a similar process of working hard. The patient also needs time to allow the body temperature and energy to regulate. Likewise, the healer allows his or her hands and body to rest before washing or else the same effect might occur. But if it is found necessary to wash, heated water that is slightly warmer than body temperature is used. Many prefer the use of alcohol for washing.

### **Indigenous Science**

There exists an ancient indigenous scientific counterpart to the metaphysical level of sickness. The belief in vessels, called *urat* and *pennet* sets the foundation of how manual medicine in the Philippines evolved. Not only does the *urat* and *pennet* carry bio-

energy, but also describes structures such as nerves, veins, tendons, arteries, sinews, ligaments, muscles, intestines, windpipe, etc. In other words, an *urat* and *pennet* describes a vessel-like structure that anything can pass through. The concept of the *urat* and *pennet* has its parallel in the native sciences of neighboring countries.

In the Ayurvedic and yogic traditions of India, the *nadis* are vessels that carry *prana* or life force energy. The *srotas*, on the other hand, are carriers of blood, air, food, water, plasma, sweat, lymph, etc. Being highly complex since historical times, their influence has reached eastern and western nations.

In the Thai practice of *Nuad Bo'Rarn*, or Thai manual medicine, the *en* or *sen en* are not only carriers of *prana*, but also describe structures that are long, hollow, and tubular such as veins, blood vessels, tendons, cartilage, muscles, and ligaments. Thai medical practices were well established dating back to the time of the Buddha.

*Urut*, the Indonesian and Malaysian names for manual medicine (*Apun* in Balinese), use the terms *urat* and *uat* (just like some of the Northern Luzon languages) to describe tendons, nerves, veins, blood vessels, muscles, as well as a transporter of spiritual bio-energy. These countries have preserved their traditional *lontar* or *usada* medical texts, which, in the past, have been inscribed on palm leaves for centuries.

The concept or acknowledgment of these physical vessels has also traveled into the outlying islands. In Guam, manual medicine (*Lasa*) manipulates the *gugat*. These vessels are also known among Pacific Islanders as *uaua*, *a'a*, *waan*, etc. Not only does this show a linguistic tie, but also points out the importance of these vessels.

My maternal grandmother, Alejandra “Allang” Mayor, was not only a respected midwife but also a well-rounded healer. Her knowledge of the *urat* and *pennet* was unique. One of her testimonials involved a patient that had inflammation of the lymph (*babara*) in the groin. Since the inflammation was predominantly on one side, she treated this by systematically working the armpit opposite to the inflammation, following an “x” or contralateral lines.

With these contralateral lines, she would treat similar cases, not only through *Ablon*, but also by tying a string around the toes, especially the *tangan* (big toe), a practice that is also found in India. The linking of these distant *urat* is similar to the Thai *sen kalathari* vessels which crosses at the navel and connects the opposite extremities down to the fingers and toes.

Since the *urat* is interconnected throughout the entire body, its manipulation can have effective results. Jose Ocampo, one of my teachers in the Philippines, happened to be the town’s midwife. One day, a couple with their baby that he had delivered in the past came to him because the baby had a fever for four days straight. Due to open wounds



Apo Allang, my maternal grandmother, was a prominent healer and midwife.

Honolulu, Hawai'i

Photo Copyright © 2000 | Virgil Apostol



to my teacher's hands, he asked me to handle it. I found the baby nonlethargic and responsive with smiles. The body temperature, however, was hot to the touch.

Diluting some vinegar (*suka*) and applying it several times to the insides of the elbows, knees, soles, and palms, I began to manipulate the *urat* on the soles, especially the *tangan* (big toe). After a couple of minutes, the baby stopped smiling and began to cry. Instantaneously, beads of sweat as big as kernels of corn broke free (diaphoresis) from the top of the baby's head. This was immediately dried off followed by instructions to keep the baby's head covered from draft. By this time, the baby's temperature drastically reduced down to normal.

Those who become healers believe that they have a special calling. Some claim that various spirits instructed them; that they are a product of breech birth (*sunì*) as my grandmother was; or were part of a family in which the tradition was being passed on. But for an average Westerner to learn these skills, he or she must be open-minded, grasp the principles and concepts, and have a fair understanding of the culture and environment in which they evolved.



Beads of sweat broke free from this baby's head after being treated for a heat condition. Dipaculao, Aurora.  
Photo Copyright © 1996 | Virgil Apostol

### Two Sides of a Coin

It is quite interesting to note that many Filipino elders, who are experts in the native healing arts, are also experts in the native martial arts (e.g. *Arnis* and *Escrima*). It is as if these two arts are two sides of a coin. If an injury were to occur whether during practice or an actual encounter, such knowledge would make an essential difference in the recovery process.

My grandfather, Lucio Respicio Mayor, was such a person. Besides from his expertise in the weapon art of *Siete Tero*, his empty-hand art was called *Cuerdas*, an adopted Spanish term translating as “cords” which tied in to the *urat*. According to my uncles, depending on the desired result, my grandfather was able to cause his victim to fall unconscious, collapse with temporary paralyses, become hysterical, and cause internal hemorrhage or epistaxis (*daringongo*) among other things, all accomplished by knowing which points to attack. It was usually on the back of the body, opposite side of the point struck, or along the *urat* that a counter-point or area was manipulated in order to reverse what was initiated. Herbal medicine was administered such as the chewing and swallowing of young guava leaves to help in coagulation if one were spitting up blood. For a bleeding cut, the leaves were first masticated then applied externally. Sometimes the inner skin-layer of a large, freshly cut bamboo was used to seal the cut.

Besides from blows or cuts received from strikes or slashes, the practice of *Arnis* can also result in musculoskeletal injuries. For example, if I was to strike you and you disarmed me, that disarm might have involved a torque or twist to my wrist, thus causing

injury. As a result, inflammation may set in, and if not treated in time, adhesions, which are basically the hardening of the surrounding structure, may develop. As a consequence, limited range of motion and long-term soreness can occur. With knowledge of *Ablon*, one can prevent or reverse these impediments and help speed up the healing process.



Knowledge of both the martial and healing arts go hand-in-hand. Here, Apo Jose maneuvers a trap and disarm on Apostol. Dipaculao, Aurora.  
Photo Copyright © 1996 | Virgil Apostol

Another advantage of possessing knowledge of *Ablon* is an acquaintance of the human body. I had a friend who flew down to see me about his shoulder. One of his favorite *Arnis* styles was the sword and dagger, but for years he endured pain to this area. After a couple *Ablon* sessions, we discovered that every time he thrust forward to the upper chest or head region (especially with most of his opponents taller than he), his elbow extended horizontally. This movement was causing an impingement in his shoulder while in motion resulting in wear and tear. The option of keeping the

elbow pointing down while thrusting was more natural to the shoulder joint and did not cause any pain.

During an interview, one of the questions asked of me was in regards to what suggestion I might have for someone interested in learning our healing traditions. I responded by stating that the introduction of *Ablon* or *Hilot* into the mainstream needs to go through the right channels to receive proper accreditation and support within the field of Holistic Medicine before spreading to individuals who do not have some sort of professional state license, thus protecting the integrity of these healing traditions in the future.

If someone is sincere in learning the healing arts, they need to realize that they are dealing with a practice in the field of medicine, hence the term, “traditional medicine.” It is not a game and it needs to be done in a proper manner. I have already given my support to a handful of aspirants that was sincere in entering this field.

### **Traditional Filipino Healing into the Future**

Traditional healing methods are continuously sought despite the presence of hospitals and medical clinics. They are also sought not only because they are less expensive, but also because they get satisfying results. Even in the more populous towns and cities, there are those who would visit a folk doctor for certain ailments before going to a medical physician, or vice versa when one would go to a folk doctor after finding no hope from a medical physician. Many receive the benefits of these two worlds.

Although some oppose the integration of traditional and allopathic medicine, there is a growing crowd that is for this merging. Due to large organizational and corporate backing, what usually happens in such cases is that the physicians of allopathic medicine tend to have the last say. Whatever the physicians say, the humble folk healers must abide by, thus stripping them of their holistic practices by displacing them into the

mainstream. Other attempts are to commercialize traditional medicine as a tourist attraction.

Fortunately, in many cases, medical physicians and other health professionals feel just at home when traditional Filipino medicine is concerned. Not only because it comes with the culture but because these professionals are open-minded and are beginning to integrate them into their own practice. The concept of mind-body medicine may be new to many, but not to the ancients who were naturally holistic in their approach to life – physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The healing arts of the Philippines, and of other great cultures, are a testimony to the wholeness that we seek to return to.

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Derived from Apostol's forthcoming book on traditional Filipino healing.

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# Hilot

## Filipino Ancient Therapy

By: Gat Puno Abon "Garimot" Baet

Hilot (/hee-lot/) is an ancient Filipino art of alternative healing therapy, which is commonly used today to relax stressed muscles. Masahista or Hilot practitioner as well as Albularyo's is the much sought alternative healing arts from the Philippines and is very much embraced by the Filipino culture, especially in very deep rural areas. Hilot employs techniques for the diagnosis and treatment of musculoligamentous and musculoskeletal ailments that at surface might appear similar to 'chiropractic' manipulation and massage. Hilot have been known to reset dislocated and sprained joints such as the knee, ankle, fingers and metacarpal bones. While some categories of Filipino Hilot use physical techniques such as muscle manipulation techniques, Albularyo are the general practitioners or herbalists and this not to be confused with Midwives (also called hilot).

Hilot, the Filipino therapeutics healing arts, are the oldest and the most secret arts in the Philippines. Most Hilot in the Philippines is either learned from relatives through hands on practice or inherited from their forefathers passing the arts from one generation to the next. Anywhere you visit in the Philippines, the majority of Filipinos is exposed to the curative value of Hilot. The art survives through family interaction, relatives and by associated friends. Hilot apprenticeship is taken seriously by the young "Hilot" to absorb as much of the knowledge as possible from his/her "Hilot Guru". Due to the fact that there is no written history of these arts, it makes it harder to find an accurate links between the knowledge and theory of the Hilot and that of other healing arts of Asia, such as arts from China, India, Japan and others.

### Other Native Names for Hilot?

Hilot is a word from the Tagalog dialect meaning massage rubbing or touch with therapeutic care. There are many words used to refer to the healer (or Hilot). From the Tagalog region there is "Hilot," "Manghihilot," "Hagod," "Manghahagod," "Haplos," "Albularyo," and "Mangagamot." Also there is "Aplos" in Bontoc region, "Unar" in the Kalinga Apayao region, "Aptus" in the Ibatan region, "Ilot" or "Ilut" in the Ibanag, Isneg, Ilocano, Itawis, Zambal and Pampango region. Then there is "Ablon" in the Northern Ilocano region, "Kemkem" in Pangasinan region, "Elot" in the Ilonggo region, "Agud" or "Agod" in the Mindanao and Maranao region, and "Hagod" in Bukidnon region.



### Hilot Research Center USA

Gat Puno Abon "Garimot" Baet founded Hilot Research Center USA in July 1993 for the intensive analysis, further investigative study, and documenting of the healing theories and practices of Hilot therapy. He gave free Hilot therapy to the group of Filipino/American in South Florida not



only in the US also in Venezuela and Germany.

One main goal has been to study and compare the similar value of other Asian healing therapy, and hoping one day we can offer Hilot therapy as alternative that can work side by side with other Asian therapies. Gat Puno Abon “Garimot” Baet’s idea is to recruit “Modern generation Hilot” to extend this art outside of the Philippines. Guro Abon or Gat Puno Abon has done much to re-organize and standardize the ancient Hilot therapy to be taught in the setting of western civilization. He successfully categorized the four types of Hilot therapies that have existed in the Philippines. Each type of Hilot Therapy has its own theories and techniques with benefits to stimulate body energy utilizing massage, herbs, various liquid essential water, oil, vinegar, fruit, wine, alcohol and more. Today we proudly present the ancient Hilot therapy.

#### **Four Major Type of Hilot:**

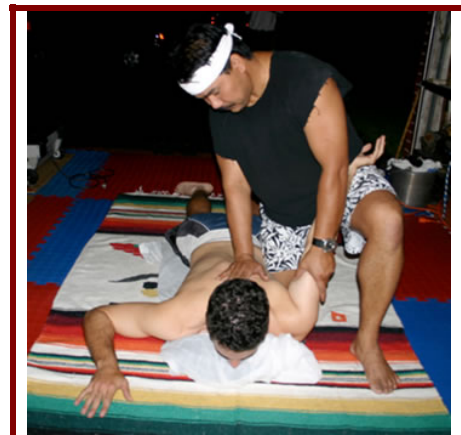
**Hilot Albularyo** - “Dangkalan” Acupressure

Therapy a musculoligamentous and musculoskeletal manipulation and massage (using coconut oil, and herbal, floral scented coconut oil)

**Hilot Buga** - “Hagod” Herbal Therapy, massage diagnostic utilizing herbal mixture w/ oil, vinegar and other essential ingredients. (Ginger, garlic, honey, fruit, alcohol, lime, beetle nut etc.

**Hilot Bintusa** - Heat and Cupping therapy a deep tissue therapy utilizing heat/fire, and heat cupping techniques using (Bamboo, coconut shell, glass or porcelain cup and fire).

**Hilot Babad - Aqua Therapy** - Babad means soak in water or essential herbal/water mixture to relieves stress or tired body. It a relaxing therapy using mass body of water, or warm water with vinegar, oil, alcohol and herbs.



Puno is working on receiver back, as he demonstrating “Dangkalan” techniques of the Hilot Albularyo, the receiver complaining a back and shoulder ache.

#### **What Are the Benefit of Hilot Therapy**

Hilot Therapy increases the lubrication between muscle fibers and allows the muscle to move optimally. Muscle fibers are designed to work independently of each other. When muscles dry out, or dehydrate, the fibers stick together and the muscle becomes stiff or ridged. As fluid is reintroduced, the muscle softens and regains its flexibility. As circulation increases between the muscle fibers, nutrients reach the cells and toxins are carried off more efficiently.

Aging is largely a process of dehydration. The less water in the body, the more quickly we age. As we dehydrate, we begin to shrink and as our muscles become smaller, our skin begins to wrinkle. Drinking lots of water and having regular massage is a great way to get rid of wrinkles. At post mortem, muscle dehydration is found at every area of disease. This would lead one to believe that good circulation could possibly keep one healthy. Degenerative diseases like cancer and muscular sclerosis are anaerobic and cannot live in an oxygenated environment. Because blood carries oxygen to the cells circulation is necessary for optimal health. The Bible teaches that life is in the blood. If

this is true we need the best circulation we can get. Hilot Therapy increases circulation, hence, increases oxygen to the cells.

From a psychological point of view, massage creates a sense of being cared for, of being nurtured. Hilot helps us become more aware of our bodies and the feelings we value. Human touch connects one person to another and the feelings healing shared and energizing emotionally. Safe touch is an important part of life; Therapeutic massage is a relaxing way to heal and enjoys life.

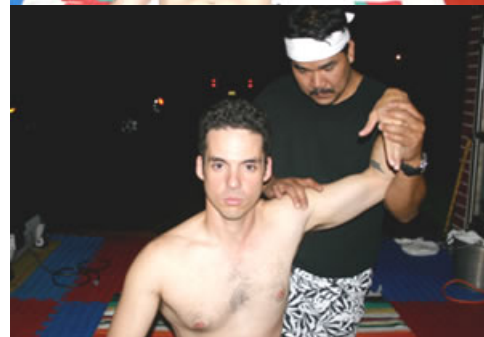
Looking at Hilot from a physics point of view, we see that electromagnetic energy called “buhay” is transferred from the giver to the receiver and back. Gadgets or machines cannot duplicate this energy transfer. The oriental cultures call this energy Chi’ or life energy. The world-renowned nuclear physicist, Professor Serge Sitka, of Vidguk from Ukraine, has developed equipment that is able to record this energy in the millimeter range of radio waves. This human energy transfer is an important part of the healing process. Many believe that this is simply love being transferred from one person to another. Massage gives one a feeling of comfort and relaxation like a mini vacation from the pressures of life or simply stressful lifestyle.

A clinical study at the University Of Miami School Of Medicines shows that massage increases mental alertness and accuracy in mathematical calculations. A group was given mathematical problems both before and after a series of massages and accuracy increased some 20%. Massage also increases beta waves in this study, which shows that one is more relaxed after a series of massages. This relaxed state lasts longer as the cumulative benefits of more massage at regular intervals are experienced. Weekly massage will make you look and feel years younger.

### **Hilot Therapy Theory and Practice**

**Haplos** (*Light Rub*) - a gentle rub massage, gently place the palm to the skin, lightly press and rub down stream stroke or up stream stroke. This is great first step on the Hilot Massages; it help promotes stimulates the body. Help awakening the sleepy nerve and circulatory system. This helps the body to keep it in warm temperature, for Hilot Massages greater result.

**Hagod** (*Massage*) - is a gentle and passionate touch of the giver to receiver. This is the most important part of Hilot, here were you will be receiving healing energy from the Healer. Hilot Guro is applying various essential massages stroke for giving soothing and relaxing massage. Weather you are receiving a healing treatment or just having a relaxing massages, Hilot Guro will certainly make sure that your body is essentially treated to enhance it, reduces the heart rate and blood pressure,



Gat Puno applying the shoulder/arm manipulation to release calcified tension to the shoulder, to release the “buhay sala” or energy block.

increases blood circulation and lymph flow, reduces muscle tension, improves flexibility, and relieves pain.

**Patong** (*Top Hand Position*) - is a pleasing relaxing massages, which Hilot Guru place his palm on top of the body press lightly. Here the heat temperature from Hilot Guru Palm, transmitted, to the skin, open pores and energy were absorbed and circulated to the body of the receiver. These were effective treatments and helps enhances positive results if the receiver closes his/her eyes during treatments. Treatment promotes increase of blood circulation, its good for relaxations it maintained the body in warm temperatures.

**Sahod** (*Palm Scooping Position*) - is a massage stroke used by Hilot Guro, if the receiver is lying, it's a palm scooping motion from the bottom to the side of the body. This is also effective stroke to apply in the lower tummy area, to pull and stretched the deep tummy elastic muscle without hurting or bruising.

**Tuon** (*Palm Press*) - is a palm press massage techniques use majority to the back of the body, and some occasions to the major pressure points. A Hilot Guro pressed into the energy point located near the left or right of the upper back to release built up tension and back pain, is a very common technique during the massage. But a full Hilot also involves the backs of the legs and the deeper muscles within the buttocks.

**Turo** (*Point Finger Press*) - is a finger press massages techniques use mostly to the deep tissue, tendon, ligament treatments, joints and circulatory system. A Hilot Guro pressed into the acupressure points, and dig in to work to the deep tissue, and triggering the electromagnetic tissue that helps increase the circulatory system to carry the energy to the particular target spots. These massage techniques openly painful for the first press and slowly relieving pain as the process and healing progress.

**Diin** (*Thumb Press*) - is a thumb press massages techniques use by Hilot Guro, to press major and minor acupressure points. This is the massage technique used in "Salamin" or "Dagdagay" (Reflexology) or foot massages. Reflexology is a science, which deals with the principle that there are reflex areas in the feet, and hands, which correspond to all of the glands, organs and parts of the body. Stimulating these reflexes properly can help many health problems in a natural way, a type of preventative maintenance.

**Dakot** (*Grab Press*) - is a massage techniques used by Hilot Guro, to grab and squeeze lightly or medium the muscles. This technique is good for arm, shoulder, leg and thigh muscles. This massage technique helps reduces muscle tension, improves flexibility, and relieves pain.

**Pisil** (*Finger Press*) - is a massage techniques used by Hilot Guro, to press the small muscle parts in the body, like hands, feet, face, nose, eyelids, and ears. This massage technique helps



reduces muscle tension, improves flexibility, and relieves pain.

**Kurot** (*Pinching Press*) - is a massage techniques used by Hilot Guro to pinch skin and outer tissue to awaken the sleeping senseless feeling body. This technique also is effective techniques to use to hairline, pulled muscle and minor pinch nerve.

**Liyabe** (*Knuckle Press*) - is a massage techniques used by Hilot Guro to break it down the muscle spasm, by making a fist stick out the pointer and index knuckles. Hilot Guru will press knuckle to muscle and do the clockwise twisting strokes like holding a key and opening the locks, this stroke will help the muscle to rotating stretched that help to break the knots or ease the muscle pain.

**Kamau** (*Fist Press*) - is a massage techniques used by Hilot Guro to back muscles, alternative for the palm press. Fist press techniques use majority to the back of the body, and some occasions to the larger joints. A Hilot Guro pressed into the energy point located near the left or right of the upper back to release built up tension and back pain, is a very common technique during the massage. But a full Hilot also involves the backs of the legs and the deeper muscles within the buttocks.

**Braso** (*Arm Press*) - is a massage techniques used by Hilot Guro to the muscle, especially if the muscle is bruised, it's a wise to use the arm for rubbing motion to help the bruised to disappear and help blood circulation to put it back to a norm. This technique also is advisable to use for a swollen part of the muscles, to push away the stagnant energy to other part of the body.

**Siko** (*Elbow Press*) - is a massage techniques used by the Hilot Guru to work on the deep tissue massage treatments. This form of techniques is advisable to the athletes, or the person using too much of the muscle for hard works. Effective techniques to use for the muscles spasm and back ache, due from sciatic irritations. Often used to the male since male muscular activities is some rougher than the female. Its does not mean, isn't effective to used to a female, its just the female muscle is tender than man probably due from their natural and flexible muscular attributes.

**Apak** (*Foot Press*) - is a massage techniques use by the Hilot Guru to the back massage treatments. This is often used by a female Hilot, often times female Hilot struggle to break the muscle spasm and work deep tissue massage, located to the back of the muscles, they would prepared to used their foot for greater strengths and affectivity. This work alternatively with Tuhod techniques.

**Tuhod** (*Knee Press*) - is a massage techniques use by the Hilot Guru to the back massage treatments. This is often used by a female Hilot, often times female Hilot struggle to break the muscle spasm and work deep tissue massage, located to the back of the muscles, they would prepared to used their foot for greater strengths and affectivity. This work alternatively with Apak techniques.

**Tampal** (*Palm Tap*) - is a percussion palm massage techniques used by the Hilot Guru, to the muscle and joints. It's given passionate relaxing results, it reduces pain and relaxing an ache muscles caused of fatigues or stressed condition.

**Pitik** (*Finger Tap*) - is a percussion finger massage techniques used by the Hilot Guru, to ease headache due from cold and sinus allergy. Its helps relax and open the congested nose, clear up the air passages caused of colds or allergy.

**Suklay** (*Finger Comb*) - is a finger comb techniques used to massage the head, by combing using all the tips of the fingers, on up and down passion. This helps the hair breaths and pores release some tension often causes headache. It's also helps the oxygen to flow freely and relaxes brained muscles caused of the soothing massages.

**Bayo** (*Hammer Tap*) - is a hammer fish percussion massage techniques used by the Hilot Guru to the muscles, to ease the ache muscle spasm, due from lack of rest or over works. This is also great technique for shocking the muscle to bring it for the instant warm temperature conditions.

**Tulak** (*Pushing*) - is a pushing technique to help the body parts to stretched in therapeutic ways. These techniques often used to help the other massage techniques to work faster or effectively. This technique is essential part of techniques in bone setting procedures.

**Hila** (*Pulling*) - is a pulling technique to help the body parts to stretch in therapeutic ways. These techniques often used to help the other massage techniques to work faster or effectively. Its effective techniques for the arms, legs and neck area, its help stretched and free the foreign pinch nerve on the arms and leg area. This technique is essential part of techniques in bone setting procedures.

**Pili** (*Twisting*) - is a massage techniques used by Hilot Guro, to feel the dislocation and proper bone set of the arms, hand fingers, neck, legs and ankles. High skilled Hilot Guru uses this technique, this might not suitable to use by beginner Hilot without the Hilot Guru supervision. This technique is essential part of techniques in bone setting procedures.

**Tiklop** (*Folding*) -is a massage techniques used by the Hilot Guru by folding, and manipulating fingers, hands, elbow, knee, ankles and toes. This technique is essential part of techniques in bone setting procedures.

**Inat** (*Stretch*) - is a massage techniques used by the Hilot Guro, to stretched the body, arm and legs. This technique is essential part of techniques in musculoskeletal & bone setting procedures. Inat also can be practiced as stretching exercise, to promote flexibility and enhances the body mobility.

**Agos** (*Down Stream Stroke*) - is a massage strokes in downward passion, from head to the foot, following the flow of the circulatory system. Some Hilot Guro called this “Agos ng Buhay” Natural flow of life sunrise to sunset in sense.

**Salunga** (*Up-Stream Stroke*) - is a massage strokes in up ward passion, from feet to the head, counter flow of the circulatory system. Other Hilot Guro called this “Salungat sa Agos” reversal flow of life from sunset to sunrise.

**Rolyo** (*Rolling Stroke*) - is a massage techniques used by the Hilot Guro by rolling muscles all over the body starting from the arms, body, legs, and ankles, and foot, then reverse to foots, ankles, legs, body head and arms.

**Tag-tag** (*Vibrating Stroke*) - does the Hilot Guro use a massage-vibrating stroke by pressing his palm on top of the muscle and start pushing into vibrating passion up and down. The vibrating strokes technique is good for arm, shoulder, and leg and thigh muscles. This massage technique helps reduces muscle tension, improves flexibility, and relieves pain.

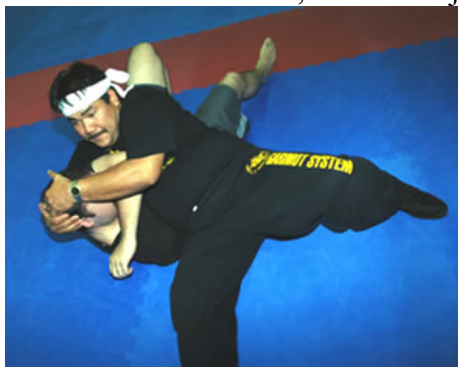
**Bilo-bilo** (*Circling Stroke*) - is a circling massage stroke used by Hilot Guro, by using his thumb and hand in circling passion. This technique is an effecting stroke to break down the muscle spasm, and the annoying knot from old bruise or injuries. This massage technique helps reduces muscle tension, improves flexibility, and relieves pain.

### **Hilot and Martial Arts?**

Hilot and Martial Arts has one thing in common, both arts studies the human physical anatomy, both arts required long years of physical studies, required passion, patient, determination to reach the mastery.

In Garimot Harimaw Buno system (Filipino Wrestling) back in the old days, practitioner required the to learn the “Hilot “ before he/she is accepted to the Harimaw Buno training, like the wrestler the Hilot are master of muscle and bones manipulations. In fact major position in Hilot is exactly the same position utilized in Harimaw Buno.

The Buno practitioner, one must understand how to stop his assailant, by controlling or subduing his opponent by means of lock control position or knocking them out by choke or breaking a limbs. While in Hilot, practitioner must understand how to heal all of the bruised muscle, dislocated joints, pints nerve and injured body.



Applying Buno techniques of chokes and head cranks.



Demonstrating head crank.



In the Garimot family both arts is well embraced and practiced for more than 100 years, up to this day in modern days. Gat Puno Abon teaches the two arts equally to his student and follower.



### **The Founder and Guro**

Gat Puno Abon “Garimot” Baet - Studied the art of Ancient Hilot direct from his Grandmother Eliana “Eli” Baet on 1978, and Father Maestro Felipe “ Garimot” Baet, plus 10 more expert Hilot from the Laguna, Quezon, and Albay, in the Philippines. He started to practice Hilot as early 1980 in the Philippines then when he migrated to the US on 1989 he brought the art and his practice with him. He practiced Hilot and serves the Filipino/American community in South Florida, Ft. Lauderdale-Miami area.

The demand for Hilot in South Florida caused him to focus on organizing and standardizing the “Hilot Therapy,” and by 1993, he founded: Hilot Research Center USA, dedicated to the research of Hilot and similar therapies. He gave numerous seminars and demonstrations showing the Hilot therapy in the method he standardized based on the Ancient Hilot Therapy that he learned from various experts Hilot from the Philippines. He was asked to do demonstrations in seminars in Chicago, Missouri, New York (including Syracuse), California, Wisconsin, Texas, South Carolina and Georgia in the US. He has also demonstrates Hilot in Venezuela and Germany.

Over the past 13 years, Gat Puno Abon has also researched various similar theories similar to Hilot and then analyzed the differences and the similarities of these other Asian alternative therapies. He has collaborated with practitioners of Japanese therapeutic massage, Chinese acupressure and acupuncture and other therapies. In analyzing these similar theories, he compared them with their counterpart in Hilot, and he documented the similarities and differences. After much continued demand, today he is now ready to share his brand of Hilot therapy to those interested in learning and becoming Certified Hilot Practitioners under the direction of Gat Puno Abon “Garimot’ Baet himself.



Today Gat Puno Abon “Garimot” Baet is the foremost authority on “Filipino Hilot Therapy,” and he is also planning to publish his long awaited “Hilot Therapy” book. For inquiries, classes, seminar, and Hilot program, you can contact:



My Hilot and Arnis mentor my dad, Felipe "Garimot" Baet, my grandfather Grandmaster Jose "Uti" Baet, and the two out of my 11 Maestro.



Maestro Peping Dimasaka and Maestro Victor "Afu" David

**Gat Puno Abon "Garimot" Baet  
Founder/Hilot Guro**

Hilot Research Center U.S.A.  
1240 NW 92nd Ave.  
Pembroke Pines, Florida 33024  
Tel. 954-432-4433  
Cell. 305-788-4403  
**Email:** Gattpuno@aol.com



[www.garimot.com](http://www.garimot.com)



## Revival and Re-introduction of Traditional Filipino Healing Practices into American Society

Paper presented at the International Conference on the Hawai'i Filipino Centennial  
Honolulu, Hawai'i, 15 December 2006

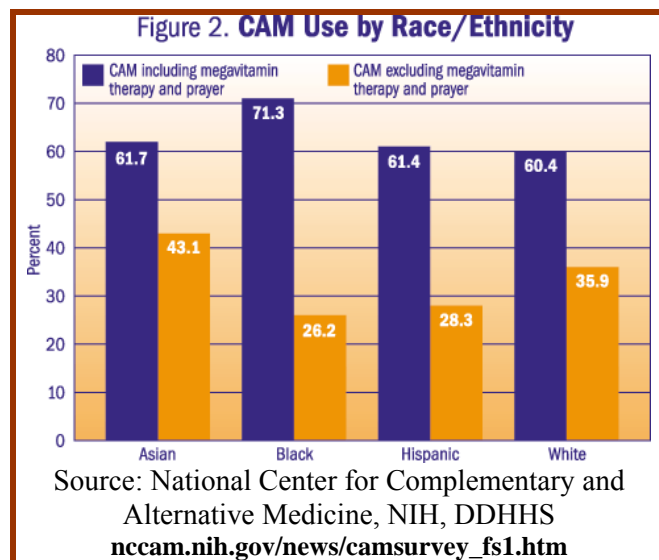
By Virgil J. Mayor Apostol, HHP, BBA

America is indeed a melting pot of migrants from all parts of the globe. They have contributed their cultural flavor to some degree. With these peoples come their unique healing practices for it is what they know and have used to heal themselves since time immemorial. Undoubtedly, the best known of these Asian and Oriental ethnic healing practices is Chinese Acupuncture that have been accepted into the mainstream across America. Japanese *Shiatsu* has made a name and *Nuad Bo'Rarn* of Thailand has already risen to popularity.

Due to historical accounts that have influenced the psychology of the people, Filipinos have become victims of a colonial mentality that has placed neglect on our own cultural heritage in favor of just about everything "American." Our very own traditional Filipino medical system, although very strong in the Philippines, is taken for granted here in the West. Although the younger generation may have heard of these healing practices, they are practically unknown by non-Filipinos.

In spite of this neglect, our healing traditions have survived the test of time. It is not impossible to ask someone within a Filipino-American community if they know of a traditional healer, only to be directed to Tata Berto or Apo Liding whom with their skilled touch, continue to relieve health issues from indigenous scientific and sociocultural point of views. In fact, according to a survey conducted by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Asian adults were more likely (43.1%) to use CAM (excluding megavitamin therapy and prayer specifically for health reasons) than white adults (35.9%) or black adults (26.2%).(i)

So why is there a decline of interest in promoting our very own healing traditions? Is it due in part to our assimilation into the American way of life? Do we believe that Western ways are superior to our own? Or is there just a lack of traditional healers?



### Colonization of the Philippines

There are several factors that influence the mindset of Filipinos. One of these factors is the effect of colonization. Whenever the Spanish subjugated communities, it

was required by the people to reduce their daily attire to simple drab clothing in order to identify them in a caste with restricted privileges. This scenario, having taken place in the Philippines, caused a psychological affect on how Filipinos perceived themselves. This inferiority complex exacerbated during the American regime that brought Hollywood and a foreign standard favored by Filipinos. Even to this day, this complex can be seen in local and national media in the Philippines which further influences an attitude of how Filipinos should think and look.

The erection of hospitals in the Philippines during the 16th century introduced a Western approach to illnesses and disease, giving the Filipinos an opportunity to be treated by the new elite form of medicine. The Filipinos now had the better of two worlds for they began to understand that there were elements within these two brands of medicine that were more effective for certain conditions.



Supsup, commonly known as bintosa or “cupping,” is used by some Filipino healers to regulate the wind element.

Photo Copyright © 2003 |  
Virgil Apostol and Elle Gamboa



Redness after cupping resulting in the wind element and blood moving to the surface.

Photo Copyright © 2004 | Virgil Apostol

The traditional Filipino medical system is composed of various specialties such as midwifery, pulse diagnosis, bonesetting, manual medicine, herbology, and adjunct forms including suction cupping, skin scrapping, herbal steam, herbal smoke, and energy medicine – all of which are backed by an indigenous science of Asian origin. There are also numerous forms of metaphysical healing that not only deal with spiritual realms but also the mental and emotional aspects. The introduction of Western medicine not only introduced the sciences of Hippocrates, but also those of Arab origin including that of Persian physician, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), since Spain was historically a Muslim country.

The form of medicine brought by the Spanish involved anatomy, physiology, chemistry, surgery, and other sciences. There was some apparent overlapping between the two medical systems such as humoral pathology – the belief in important fluids of the humors: blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. These fluids had specific characteristics such as hot, cold, wet, and dry. One of the basic concepts of traditional Filipino medicine is the principle of *pasma*, a Spanish loan word describing a condition caused from an imbalance of these four humoral characteristics, particularly the hot-cold syndrome.

While the Filipino medical system relatively maintained tradition, Western or “allopathic” medicine in the Philippines evolved through the centuries. Today, medicine

practiced in these hospitals are high-tech with instruments ranging from x-rays to CAT scans, while former practices such as humoral pathology and even pulse diagnosis has mostly gone into oblivion.

It is interesting to note that in the Philippines, practitioners of traditional medicine outnumber practitioners of biomedicine, with at least 40,000 traditional birth attendants and 100,000 herbalists - high figures that do not even account for the thousands of *manghihilots*, acupuncturists, and other practitioners.(ii) In the United States, however, the reverse ratio applies in that the availability of Filipino healers is smaller than practitioners of allopathic medicine. This leaves a void in the Filipino who would rather go to a traditional Filipino healer for an ankle sprain or fever, but who would not hesitate to go to the hospital for an erupting appendix or chronic disease. Filipinos in the United States are at home with both worlds but with a limited supply of healers in the traditional Filipino medical system, going to them is rarely an option. As a result, Filipinos become assimilated into the American way of life.

### **Assimilation into the American Way of Life**

Taking the workplace as an example of this assimilation process, we work and obtain medical insurance from our employers. Once we get injured on the job, we are sent to an urgent care facility that provides us with immediate attention. The medical provider diagnosis the condition, prescribes medications, releases us with a temporary work disability, and submits us to weeks or even months of physical therapy by which time our medical provider confirms that we are rehabilitated and gives us authorization to return to work. This is the overall scenario but there are also other factors affecting us along the way.

Getting injured is a physically and mentally stressful situation. Depending on the severity, pain can be anywhere from mild to excruciating. The medications that are prescribed can be taxing to our liver where they accumulate and add physiological stress. During the rehabilitative stage, physical therapists perform their duties according to the books but are sometimes not proficient. The length of time off work can also be added stress due to the fact that we may not be receiving full monetary benefits. Soon after, we get emotional stress over how we are going to pay all the bills.

Granted that we have successfully undergone rehabilitation, persistently, our injuries sometimes seem to linger. We return to our medical provider who explains that we have gone through therapy and that there is nothing more that they could do but to prescribe more painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs.

Time and time again, I have heard this scenario from several of my clients that wished they had known of our healing methods the moment they were injured. In fact, because of the unique method to help heal impediments due to injuries, if placed within the medical model, the practitioner of Filipino manual medicine would fall ideally as a median between the medical doctor and the physical therapist. One reason is because of the no-nonsense approach to healing injuries and chronic pain - the evolutionary result of centuries of healing within a culture and society that have physical demands in order to survive. One of my philosophies is to “help the patient heal in the least amount of time.”

The *mangablon* or *manghihilot* (*Ablon* or *Hilot* practitioner) is very acute in assessing injuries. They have an uncanny ability to sense fractures and reset them before wrapping them up along with medicinal herbs and barks. Depending on the type of

injury, a sprain for example, a massage therapist would not touch it because it is contraindicated in their practice, otherwise the sprain might get worse, or so they believe. Instead, this is where they would suggest the RICE approach – rest, ice, compression, and elevation.

The *Ablon* approach is the opposite to that of massage. A sprain would get a thorough treatment even if it sometimes means that the person would have to bite down on a stick! But what is happening is that the *mangablon* understands that if proper manipulation is not done right away, the viscous coating around the injury will harden and adhesions will develop restricting proper blood flow and nerve impulse, thus affecting or prolonging the healing process. There are also injuries indicative of *belles* or *pilay*, a sprain or displacement of the bones, nerves, and veins. Following such injuries, inflammation is understood to occur and must be treated in order to adjust proper setting and flow.

### What Traditional Filipino Manual Medicine Is and Is Not

Due to regulated medical laws, not all modalities within the traditional Filipino medical system are allowed practice here in the West including midwifery (limited to obstetrician-gynecologists and licensed midwives); bonesetting (limited to orthopedic doctors, osteopaths, and chiropractors); and any type of practice that diagnoses medical conditions (limited to medical doctors in general).

One of the acceptable public practices of the traditional Filipino medical system in the West is manual medicine, granted that the practitioner has some form of state-approved certificate and is licensed to execute this practice. For Filipino healers that have neither certification nor license, their services are limited to close family and friends. They are highly proficient, nevertheless, in the art of traditional manual medicine that is used to help heal various health concerns, especially those relating to neurovascular and musculoskeletal imbalances.



*Ablon* is highly regarded in a clinical setting. Apostol applies a manipulative movement that has an effect on the lower back and the nerves leading down to the feet. Czech Republic, 2005.

Photo Copyright © 2005 |

Meduňka: Alternativní Cesty ke Zdraví

*Ablon* is accomplished hands-on yet differs from massage, similar to how the hands-on sciences of Chiropractic, Physical Therapy, and aspects of Osteopathy also differ. The main emphasis in treatment focuses on the *urat* (neurovascular bundles and vessels such as nerves and veins) and *pennet* (tendons, sinews, and ligaments).

Both the *urat* and *pennet* are critical in the anatomical and physiological functioning of the body. The proper assessing and unique manipulation are what make *Ablon* effective for the nervous system that regulates and coordinates bodily activities and responses, veins and

arteries that support the flow of blood, and tendons and sinews that support the structures between muscles and bones.

## **A holistic approach addressing the mind and body through cultural and sociological perspectives.**

Many traditional Filipino healers heal from both a scientific (conventional, indigenous) and spiritual (religious, metaphysical) background and holistic attitude. This is especially true since the cultural roots stem from an animistic base where spirituality is high and esoteric devotees have an uncanny ability to tap into altered states of consciousness in order to obtain information.

Perhaps the earliest concept of illness causation is that they were the result of offended elemental or ancestral spirits, or through sorcery - beliefs that still exists to this day. Those that suspect illness attributed to one of these two sources prefer treatment from a traditional healer that specializes in such cases.

Within this cultural and sociological perspective, a holistic approach is needed to heal the mind, body, and soul. If, for example, one were to fall and hurt their back, a medical professional would ask questions that are “symptom-oriented” such as “where” does it hurt and come up with a diagnosis, provide physical treatment, and offer a prognosis. Whereas a traditional Filipino healer would ask questions that are “origin-oriented” such as “why” that person fell in the first place, provide physical treatment, then counsel the individual on spiritual matters relating to the physical event.

Not only would it be beneficial but crucial for us to adopt a “holistic” lifestyle. Deriving from the Greek root word, *hólos*, for “whole,” Taber’s medical dictionary clearly defines holistic medicine as “comprehensive and total care of a patient. In this system, the needs of the patient in all areas, such as physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and economic, are considered and cared for.” Traditional medical practices of most ancient cultures approach their patients in this manner, especially the spirituality of the patient.

Edward Fujimoto, Professor and Coordinator of the Dr.P.H. Program in Preventive Care, Loma Linda University, shares his views on spirituality in healing:

*“Traditional healing arts is aptly named because the centuries of experience in the thousands of different cultures throughout the earth has demonstrated an art of healing that is still beyond the depth of knowledge that science permits. The healing arts of the past, preserved by traditional healers in diverse cultures in widespread locations today, have a unifying spiritual characteristic which can mean various things. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that all cultures have qualities that are valued such as love, concern, empathy, joy, gratitude, trust, and faith that oftentimes are not necessarily religion-based, that are perhaps what spirituality is. Scientific studies have only recently revealed the role of spirituality in preserving health and promoting healing, but there is much that we do not yet know.”(iii)*

**In my personal practice when healing the “whole” person, the following areas are considered:**

**Physical Level:** When an imbalance, injury, or disability takes place, the practitioner of *Ablon* manipulates the neurovascular and musculoskeletal systems through pulling,

stretching, pressure, joint mobilization, and other indigenous therapies in order to promote equilibrium.

**Mental Level:** The consultation process is key to understanding the thinking framework of a patient and learning of probable causes of their condition.

**Emotional Level:** Emotional tendencies can play a major role on the physical body. Trauma, for example, can be recorded on a cellular level and expressed through physical holding patterns. The experienced healer would facilitate the release of these patterns and associated emotions through the application of *Ablon* to these specific sites.

**Spiritual Level:** The ancient healers realized that at least 80-90% of illnesses were spiritual in nature, while the remaining 10-20% as physical. Supporting this belief is the modern saying, “Where the mind goes, the body follows.” It is therefore important to realize that peace, harmony, and humility should be attained as a way of creating a healthy environment - internally and externally.

Each of these is affected to a certain degree and it is important to address them all. For example, applying *Ablon* can sometimes trigger other seemingly unrelated responses like catharsis and others stemming from psychosomatic conditions that, if not caught early on, can negatively influence psychoneuroimmunological functioning. One case I handled involved a single, middle-aged woman that developed a benign tumor in her uterus. After *Ablon* to the surrounding area and corresponding *urat*, I realized that she needed healing on other levels. After a few minutes into bioelectromagnetic healing (a form of energy medicine without physical touch), the woman suddenly burst out crying bitterly. Witnessing the emotional release, I continued with the session.

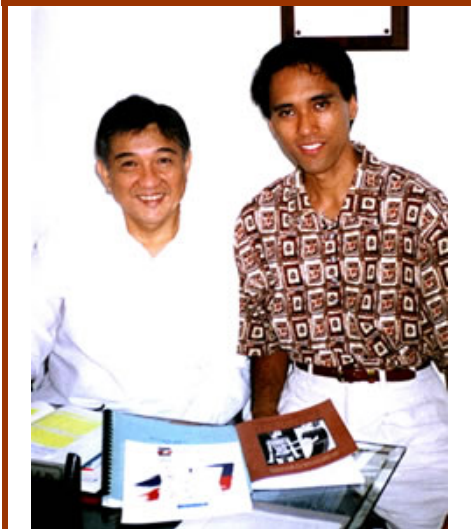
Afterwards, the woman opened up conveying that she was molested as a child and how she had been holding in the trauma all these years. But after her catharsis, she felt like a heavy burden had lifted off her shoulders.



Spiritual energetic healing, also known as bioelectromagnetic healing, has significance in both esoteric and scientific circles. Photo Copyright © 2003 | Virgil Apostol and Elle Gamboa

## **Revival and Re-introduction of Filipino Traditional Healing Practices through Formal Education and Written Works.**





Apostol posing with Tyrone M. Reyes, M.D., a physician specializing in physical medicine and rehabilitation. Makati City, 2000. Photo copyright © 2000 | Virgil Apostol

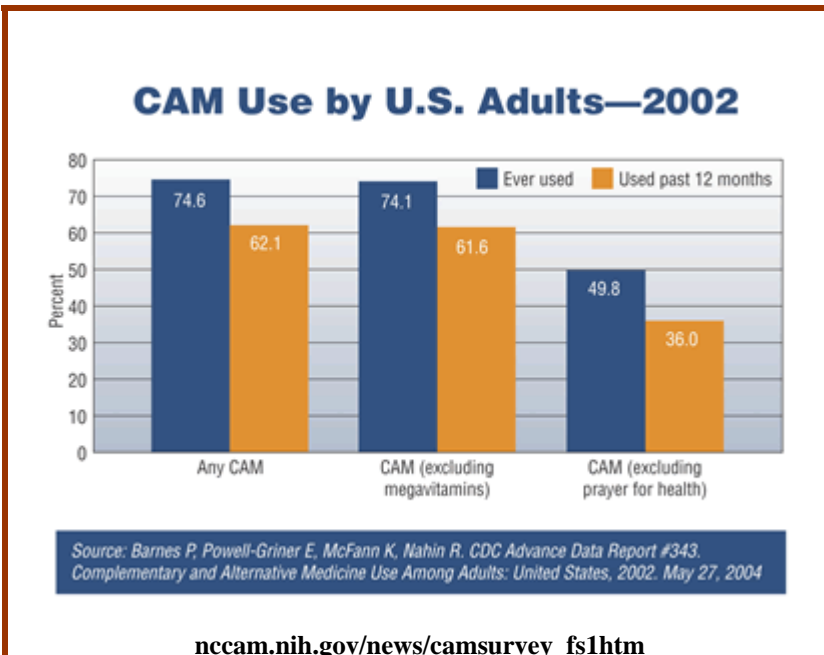
In 1990, an important report titled, “*Manghihilots: Boon or Bane to Philippine Medicine?*” was written by Doctor Tyrone Reyes, M.D., along with Ofelia L. Reyes, M.D. and Consuelo B. Suarez, M.D.

This pioneering study was undertaken with the goal of improving health care delivery services in the rural areas by using the following objectives: (1) determine the background, education and training, and existing diagnostic and therapeutic practices of *manghihilots*, (2) evaluate their perceived role in their communities, and (3) evaluate the possibility of their integration into the national health care system.

After reading this report, I realized that their attempts to uplift and incorporate certain aspects of traditional medicine into the national health care system were indeed a challenge. Problems arose due to social, cultural, and educational backgrounds, as well as the willingness of both

health professionals and traditional healers to initiate a joint effort in reaching that goal. Their report, however, is instrumental in establishing an awareness and background of two worlds that share a common goal, and the undeniable need of working in harmony and respect.

A special feature article presented in LIFE magazine read, “What we call alternative medicine is traditional medicine for 80 percent of the world, and what we call traditional medicine is only a few centuries old.”(iv) For example, a Tibetan physician practicing in the United States, informed me that traditional Tibetan medicine is the official medicine of Tibet, while allopathic medicine is considered alternative medicine.



In the United States, it is estimated that more than one-third of adults uses some form of CAM.(v) With such a high percentage of acceptability, people would only benefit from the revival and reintroduction of traditional Filipino healing practices through formal education and written works, but there needs to be a common

understanding on how these healing practices are exposed.

The various forms of manual medicine that have been introduced and taught in America have been literally stripped of their true identity. What were once reputable forms of healing have been reduced to a mere massage suitable for the spa setting, thus conforming to the expectancy of what a massage is - a one-hour, full-body treatment. Prior to seeing me, several of my clients have initially gone to such practitioners for work on specific injuries or chronic pain only to be massaged from head to toe without any emphasis given to the original site of complaint.

Likewise, when one reviews the curriculum of various holistic healing arts institutions, one may find a wide gamut of modalities from different parts of the globe. Offering such foreign modalities is an effort for these institutions to provide ethnic teachings that Americans fancy and find exotic. Just looking at the business cards of graduates in practice will reveal that they are like jack-of-all-trades, but most of the time, master-of-none. I have been invited to teach in such institutions but have kindly declined, dreading the thought of a novice placing *Ablon* or *Hilot* on his or her business card after a few hours of class instruction, not to mention, keeping the integrity and clinical aspects of this form of manual medicine intact.

There have already been limited workshops on traditional Filipino manual medicine presented by authentic practitioners throughout North America, with its true intent to help heal impediments caused by neurovascular and musculoskeletal injuries. In the Philippines, however, the term *Hilot* is now being used to describe a form of “massage” that can be luxuriously experienced in world-class spas. For the sake of joining the international masses in offering a form of bodywork with an indigenous name, I strongly consider this an abuse and disrespect to the name and art of *Hilot* because such portrayal demeans its true identity and characteristics conforming to a mere pampering complete with candle light and soft relaxing music, with a finishing touch of aromatherapy to please the olfactory nerves.

*Hilot* has become adulterated and should not be categorized as a massage. A solution would be to classify a “subcategory” of *Hilot* with a completely different name that would then be offered within these spas. As a matter of fact, a *Hilot* back in the Philippines also identifies a midwife. Could you imagine going to a spa to deliver a baby? With the dilemma of how various forms of manual medicine introduced and taught in the West are literally stripped of their true identity, I cautiously associate what I do as a Filipino form of manual medicine, practiced in a clinical setting, while uplifting its origins by calling it *Ablon* (as known among the Ilokanos, Yapayaos, and Itnegs of Ilocos Norte – my ancestral roots) in order to continue the art’s true legacy.

Articles on traditional Filipino healing practices are emerging on the website. To my knowledge, the first instructional manual published on *Hilot* was co-authored by myself back in 1998. Then in 2001, a group based in Italy published a book on *Hilot* in the Philippines. There are also other books currently in the making by other writers. After 10 years, I have finally completed my three-volume magnum opus which is to be published. The book set, which will pave the way for future workshops, will be my personal contribution to the revival and re-introduction of Filipino traditional healing practices into American society and beyond.



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Derived from Apostol’s forthcoming book on traditional Filipino healing.

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**The Antique Hilot Therapy of the Philippines**

Hilot-Ancient Therapy of the Philippines, 2001.

Ancient Publishing House, Batangas City

[hilot.interfree.it](http://hilot.interfree.it)

There were people belonging to various human races during the ancient times who rendered sincere and faithful respect to the Supreme Being. They honestly believe in the true existence of good and bad spirits. The unwritten doctrines of Hilot believe that good and bad spirits are present and competing to rule in every human body. The doctrines speak of the true presence and existence of soul in every human physical body. For the antique people’s superstitious beliefs, the symbolic eyes represent good spirits and the symbolic horns represent bad spirits. Those religious people belonging

to the different races believed and rendered faith. Some experienced and felt the true existence of this unexplainable unseen world. Each race of people has the distinctive system of conducting the rituals and offerings to demonstrate the faith to the unseen world. The faith in the world of the invisible is deeply imbedded in the heart, mind and soul. To some of them the intelligence and understanding of the fundamental knowledge about the secrets of human life were awarded as gifts by that world of the spirits. One among those lucky recipients in the ancient time is the original teacher of the antique hilot. The unknown original teacher received the gift of knowledge in the art of healing through the use of bare hands.

There are other people of the other nations who received the gifts of intelligence in the art of healing the human body. There are several antique systems of pain healing distributed worldwide. There is one thing in common among these many types of antique healing. All of the antique methods are supporting the existence of the spirits.

Some of the antique arts of healing in varied forms, techniques and names are still used in the present day around the world. Some of these arts were proven to be effective. Now, even the modern medical science tries to adopt some similar antique approaches but based on the modern scientific concept in the curing of body ailments.

These writings particularly pertain to the unique therapeutic massage which is antequely known as Hilot. This is a part of the antique traditional culture of the Filipino people in the far east of Asia. This is the art of the antique healing through the use of bare hands and plant oil. This antique method of the massage could heal various pains and illnesses in the human body.

The term "Hilot" is used until these days as the professional name of the woman who serves massage therapy exclusively for women. The term "Albularyo" is the professional name of the man who practices the healing through the use of medicinal plants and who also does massage treatments for men. The Filipino people in the ancient times consider hilot as a miraculous art of healing. Even now, some may still consider that it is a miraculous method of healing upon knowing the real depth of its capacity to heal.

Hilot is composed of a broad knowledge. It is like a tree with various branches of specialization. Its pain healing treatment serves as a defense or preventive measure to avoid the occurrence of more serious body ailments. This therapeutic massage is of significant value from the childhood stage until the old age of a man. Not to mention, it can serve even the infant who is still in the bosom of the mother. This antique art is to be considered mysterious. Mysterious in the sense that no one knows when and where the art was really founded. Nobody knows who the mysterious founder of the art was.

There exists no history record of its development nor can any kind of a written antique book be found. There are no formal and organized lectures done for the transfer of the knowledge to the succeeding generations. And, not even a single record of information about the former healers is traceable. The only traceable marks left are the copper pendants with different sizes, shapes and engraved marks which were worn by the ancient healers and were handed down to the next generations. During the past generations the antique pendants were considered mysterious. The old people who bear the pendants have strong faith that those could provide them mystic abilities. The antique hilot is in the phase of its revival in this third millennium serving not only a

single race. This final revival shall serve all the races of people who will have faith in the antique method of healing.

The traditional transfer of the technical-know-how is hereditary by nature. The art of healing is exclusively taught and practiced by the persons who belong to the family clans of the former antique healers. Sad to mention, the rapid growth of literacy during the last century of the second millennium created the negative attitude among the Filipino people as influenced by the western modern culture. The aging practitioners of the antique art could no longer find from among their children the sincere interest to inherit the knowledge. The becoming educated generation was befogged by the modernization and taught hilot is an obsolete art because it is a product of the old unscientific generation. The children of the healers who spent time and effort to finish the professional careers do not have the initiative to follow the footsteps of their parents. As to economic factor, genuine hilot practitioners in the antique time until the early years after the Second World War rendered services without tariff. This follows the old rule; the healers never sell the gift of knowledge which was received free from the parents. The new rule for this third millennium states that the workers should be paid.

The introduction of the western medical science initiated the difficulties for the continuous wide acceptance of the antique Hilot by the people in the country. The antique art started to cease for the lack of scientific explanations on how the clients could be healed by the use of the massage. The healers usually confirm that the cause of the illnesses or pains in the body is the presence of the bad spirits or in some cases due to the harm done by witch power. The explanations about spirits and witches are not acceptable in this computer age. The eyes of the new generation are befogged and focused to the modern science. The hilot needs to be explained scientifically to be accepted by the modern society.

The effective healing of hilot could be explained scientifically. The proper understanding of the basic arithmetic procedures is very necessary to do calculations for the problems in the advance physics and chemistry. Similarly, the proper understanding of the true root causes of body pains is very fundamental for the finding of the appropriate solution. The modern science had discovered that the human body is composed of the varied types of living cells. Each cell is a contributing factor for the undergoing processes in the body. If the cells of the human body are all in good health, then, we may say that the person is healthy. For this reason, it is important to understand and apply the proper health maintenance for every body cell. Each cell in the human body is similar to a young plant which needs sufficient water and the necessary supply of the solid and gaseous nutrients to survive. The fundamental objective of the massage therapy is to help the blood and body liquid reach their destinations, the cells. When the blood and body liquid fail to reach a muscular cell then that cell will suffer early maturity and wilt like a dying plant. For the antique knowledge, good blood circulation requires the free movement of blood in all the muscular cells reaching the skin of the body.

The liquids present in the parts of the different systems of the body are very sensitive to the internal and environmental temperature. It is similar to the normal liquid water which could change the state of form into snow or solid ice as influenced by the temperature. The body liquid occupies space. Should the liquid solidifies in the

muscular system due to the adverse temperature it shall prohibit the entrance of the blood in the muscular cells. The solidification of body liquid in the muscular system is one of the major causal factors for body pains.

The solidified liquid in the muscular system of the body melts through the internal heat produced by the normal body movements during the day or through physical fitness exercises. Should the internal heat produced by the body movement's fails the problem of the solidification of body liquid could be remedied by the massage treatments. All of the methods of massage, in one way or another helps to melt the solidified body liquid and provide space for the normal blood movement. The antique and the modern techniques of therapeutic massage always provide the positive effects which are beneficial to the health of the human body. The therapeutic massage is the micro-global approach for the general health of the body. It might be surprising to know that the calcification in the bone may disappear through the treatment of the antique therapeutic massage. This is very true for Hilot. This antique therapeutic massage has the capacity to liquefy calcification formed in the cartilages, tendons, muscles and in the bones.

The letters of testimony and all the others presented on the website (**Click Here**) are written by the lucky patients healed by Hilot as published in the book entitled "Hilot - Ancient Therapy of the Philippines", Philippine National Book Store, Manila.



**Virgil J. Mayor Apostol** has dedicated himself to the research, development, and promotion of Filipino cultural traditions. He descends from a paternal and maternal bloodline of healers and from the teachings of respected elders. Through clinical practice, he continues to refine *Ablon* as a science and spiritual practice. His background in the Filipino martial arts has also enhanced his intuitive knowledge as a healer.

Apostol is a certified Holistic Health Practitioner and co-author of the book, *The Healing Hands of Hilot*. His association with *The Chopra Center for Well Being*, where he refined, systemized, and discreetly incorporated the intricacies of Filipino *Ablon* along with the Indian Ayurvedic therapies offered, earned him a favorable reputation, not to mention the most demanded therapist and healer. This inspired Deepak Chopra and the center's medical director, David Simon, to encourage Apostol to promote his teachings through workshops.

Wanting to pursue the clinical application of his practice, Apostol joined Norman Narchi, MD, founder of the *Center for Well Being* and *Integrative Medicine Clinic*, then later with the *Tibetan Healing Center* where he collaborated with Lobsang Dhondup, physician of traditional Tibetan medicine, in increasing the affectivity of herbal medicines through the introduction of *Ablon*. On occasion, Apostol is invited by Jeff Cohen to his *Hilot Therapy Clinic* to provide *Ablon* to members of the San Francisco Ballet for injuries sustained in the course of their practice.

Apostol was personally encouraged by Alfonso T. Lagaya, MD, MDM, who was then the Executive Director of the *Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care* (PITAHC - Philippine Department of Health) to promote *Ablon* and other Filipino healing practices in the United States. He currently holds his practice on the island of O'ahu and in southern California.



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Michelle Karen – Marina del Rey, CA

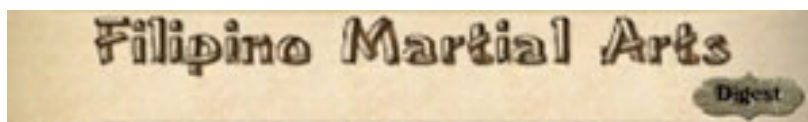
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