

Filipino Martial Arts

Rapid Journal

Digest

Special Edition
2009

Research and Propagation for Internal Arts Development



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The FMAdigest 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.

The authors and publisher of this digest are not responsible for any injury, which may result from following the instructions contained in the digest. Before embarking on any of the physical activities described in the digest, the reader should consult his or her physician for advice regarding their individual suitability for performing such activity.

From the Publishers Desk

Kumusta

It is sad when a magazine closes its doors for any reason. The FMA Digest believes that Rapid Journal was one of the best printed magazines which covered the Filipino martial arts. Created and owned by Daniel Go, who is an individual of high standards, professionalism, and an impeccable ability to bring about to the reader's, articles that are knowledgeable, educational and of interest to all; not just practitioners.

As with most martial arts magazines of today, "it seems" 70% advertisement and 30% articles, the Rapid Journal is the opposite and brings the reader it seems 80% articles and 20% advertisement.

The Rapid Journal a magazine in the Philippines, unfortunately only was known outside of the country, if one happened to visit the Philippines, the Rapid Journal website (www.RapidJournal.com), or was brought back a copy by someone who visited the Philippines.

The FMA Digest has put together this Special Edition so all will be able to see what has been in each issue of the magazine. So you can read some samples the FMA Digest has added are a couple of articles picked by the owner Daniel Go and a couple editorials which the FMA Digest found interesting and a couple editorials written by guest writers, which have some interesting facts. Each issue has an editorial that is, interesting, informative and up front.

It is most highly recommended that if you are able to purchase any of the issues, do so. It would be hard to say which issue is better than the next, for each issue has something of interest to each individual.

Just remember this is a hard copy magazine, not an internet magazine, so when sold out that is the end of being able to obtain an issue unless someone sales it privately. So get one! Get a couple! Get them all! You cannot lose with the knowledge that is in each issue.

At the time of this Special Issue there will be only one more issue of the Rapid Journal to come out. What will be in it? Only the owner Daniel Go knows, but I am sure that it will be a most fitting issue to end this outstanding publication.

Maraming Salamat Po

Rapid Journal to End Publication

For many years the primary martial arts publication based out of Manila, RAPID has featured articles on top experts of various systems practiced in the Philippines. Disciplines featured include Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Malaysian and Korean systems in addition to the native Filipino combat arts. Many major Filipino writers such as Ned Nepangue, Felipe P. Jocano Jr., Celestino Macachor, Jose G. Paman, Rene Navarro, Alexander Lim Co and Jopet Laraya have submitted works to the quarterly.

Publisher Daniel Go has stated that a number of back issues are available while supplies last. Contact Mr. Go directly at danielgo1261@yahoo.com or via his cell phone number of (0916) 425-8340. The cover and table of contents to every issue may be viewed in this issue and at the website.



www.rapidjournal.com

Rapid Journal is also now available in the US through Michael Bowers, a senior instructor of Kombatan. He can be reached (503) 657-3408. Visit their website which features all the issues available - [Click Here](#)

The #1 Martial Arts Magazine in the Philippines Publisher - Daniel Go



Like many young teenagers during the early 70s Daniel Go was an avid fan of Bruce Lee and other martial arts films. His first experience with martial arts was when he enrolled in a Kung Fu school in Manila in 1976. The school taught the Southern Chinese style of Five Ancestor Fist (or Ngo Cho Kung fu). Prior to this he was already an avid fan of kung fu movies and had read much about kung fu in many of the magazines both Chinese and English. His fascination for the martial arts was somewhat different from others. He once saw a picture from a local martial arts magazine of a master seated with his student standing beside him. To Daniel it portrayed a rare picture of a master passing his art to a diligent and persevering student and from then on he was interested in what went on in such a relationship, what did the student have to go through, what did the master teach, how did he teach it, etc. Daniel later found out that his interest in martial arts had nothing to do with self-defense although he was a quick learner of the various movements but somehow he did not have the urge to act aggressively when executing movements. Daniel was more interested in how the movements were taught, why did they have such movements etc. His interest in history was transferred to martial arts.

After six months Daniel quit the practice because the practice was hard (it was a southern style kung fu which emphasized external techniques), it did not fit Daniel's personality. However Daniel continued to do some practicing on his own and also read much about the arts. He also collected many articles and newspaper clippings on local martial arts activities and all these filled up two scrap books.

Two years later Daniel and his brother were introduced to a schoolteacher who taught them Yang style Tai Chi and also introduced them to a friend who taught Xingyi. From this teacher they had private lessons and were able to go through a number of forms like 108 Yang style Tai Chi (of Han Ching Tang), the two forms of Chen style Tai Chi, Baguazhang of Liu Yun Chiao of Taiwan, and some sword forms taught by both Masters from Taiwan who had visited the Philippines in the late 60s and early 70s. When Daniel graduated from college in 1983, he stopped practicing because he had to work full time. But he did continue to read and collect books on martial arts.

In early 1989 while in the United States, Daniel was diagnosed with cancer of the nasopharynx. After one year of treatment in Taiwan Daniel returned to the Philippines weakened by the chemotherapy and radiation treatment. Having nothing to do and being too weak he decided to go back to Tai Chi Chuan practice. The Wushu Federation of the Philippines was offering free Tai Chi lessons and he joined them. There were two sets of classes then Monday - Wednesday - Friday and Tuesday - Thursday - Saturday, Daniel attended both classes. So, as it was he was practicing every day.

After a year of practice He regained some of his strength and was healthy enough and was recruited to compete in the Taijiquan Competition, as a member of the Wushu team. So Daniel's first taste of competition was in Beijing in the First World Wushu Competition. There were two of them in the event, which represented the Philippines, the current Philippines representative and Daniel who was the alternate. He was supposed to join the competition but his score was not shown since he was not the official representative. However Daniel's score turned out to be higher than the Philippine Representatives, so he was designated as the new representative of the Philippines. The team stayed for one month in Beijing training and in 1991 Daniel earned his first gold medal in the Southeast Asian Games held in Manila, followed in 1993 at the Southeast Asian Games held in Singapore, where he earned another gold medal. His best performance came in 1994 at the Asian Games held in Hiroshima (this was the Olympics of Asia) where he earned a bronze medal.

Retiring from competition, Daniel had plans to come out with a magazine that would continue to support his love of the martial arts activities. Daniel decided to go on with the magazine. While he was thinking of a name for the magazine, his colleagues suggested to him to use the name RAPID with a slight change since he was not a part of the Wushu Federation anymore. So it came out "Research and Propagation for Internal Arts Development" or simply "RAPID Journal," this was in September 1996.

Originally the concept of the journal was to provide an outlet for the different articles on internal martial arts like Taiji, Bagua, Xingyi, Qigong, and Aikido etc. The first few issues Daniel had to do much of the writing and formulating of articles because there were very few writers that could contribute material for such martial arts. Daniel even dabbled on topics, which bordered on the spiritual and esoteric since this was also part of the many martial arts tradition in the east.

Rapid Journal Issues 1996 - 2009



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Martial Arts: Beyond the Medals (Interview With Yu Zhi Bo) * Tai Chi Chuan Hand Forms * 'Secrets' of Tai Chi Chuan * Postural Integration * Close Encounters of the Fake Kind * Black Cloak that Chokes * Tai Chi Chuan : The Art of Nature * Book Review (Chen Kung Series) * Poetry in Motion (Wardance / Bamboo Style) * Wushu Etiquette * Teachings of Master Tung Chung-I.



Volume 1 Number 2 - Book 2

The Ancients' Route (Interview with Rene J. Navarro) * Actually...There is a Secret * Standing Your Way to Health * Relaxed Awareness: The Way of Letting Go...but not too much (1) * Simplified Ch'en Style Tai Chi Chuan (1) * Looking for Yang Ch'eng-fu * Books by Douglas Wile * Poetry in Motion (Images of Tai Chi Chuan) * A Palatable Mixture * Under Siege * Origin of Mantis Boxing * Tetada Kalimasada * Wushu Family System * Mastery in Tai Chi Chuan.



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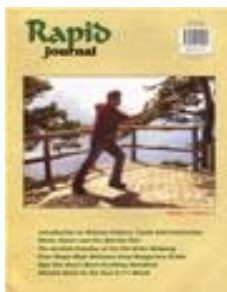
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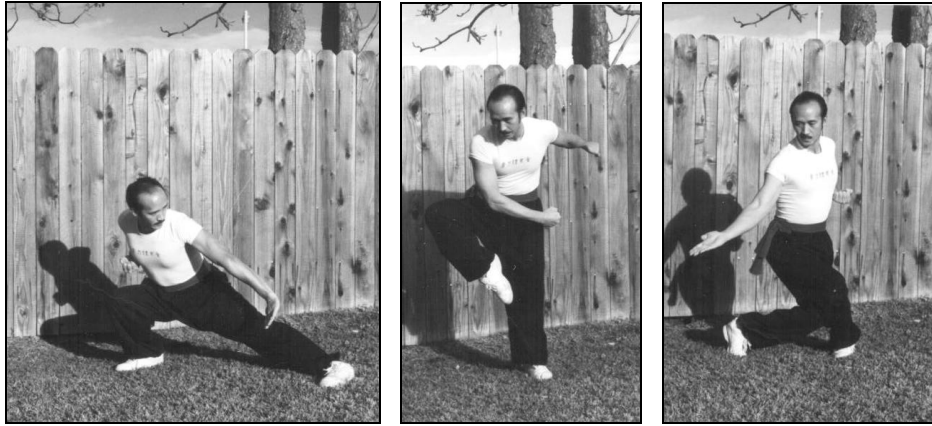
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Are Forms Useless?

By Jose G. Paman

The practice of forms, prearranged combinations of blocks, strikes, kicks and throws, represents a characteristic distinguishing Asian martial arts from those of other cultures. Forms remain a vital feature in kung-fu, karate and taekwondo schools today and are known in various disciplines as *kun toh*, *kata* and *hyung*. With the advent of full-contact kickboxing and mixed martial arts contests in contemporary times, the question naturally arises: Is the teaching of forms an anachronism, irrelevant to modern combat needs?

Two general schools of thought exist on the relevance of forms in today's martial environment. One outlook opines that forms are outdated; museum pieces best left out in favor of heavy bag and pad-striking practice, shadowboxing, roadwork, hard sparring and ground grappling. Adherents of such a perspective are typically younger in age and unschooled in the more time-honored, conventional aspects of martial arts training.

The opposing viewpoint, on the other hand, maintains that forms continue to play a vital role in overall martial education. Followers of this position come from varying age groups and tend to be grounded in the more established facets of the martial arts. They also represent the majority in this debate.

Historically, forms have been included in the training regimens of Asiatic fighting styles. The preset sequences serve as living repositories of a system's peculiar techniques, making it easier to teach and remember the techniques and thus preserving them for future generations. Forms also help to define a practitioner's identity. Watching a Hung Gar practitioner execute the tiger-crane form *fu hok seung ying* immediately identifies him as a follower of that art. Ditto the Wing Chun student executing the *biu jee* form or the Ngo Cho exponent demonstrating *sam chien sip dee*.

Beyond facilitating the teaching of a system and establishing one's identity, however, forms impart many lessons vital to a martial artist's personal development. In

this article, we'll take a look at the role of forms in the overall scheme of contemporary martial arts.

Ergonomic Execution

An immediate and very important product of forms training is the ergonomic execution of techniques. Take the basic straight punch as an example. This fundamental maneuver, common to nearly all striking-based martial systems in existence, is delivered by launching the body from the rear driving leg, placing one's weight on the front leg, turning the waist powerfully in a forward direction, and punching forward with the rear arm while keeping the back straight. Any variance from this mode of delivery leads to a less-than-efficient alignment that may cause harm to the practitioner's physical structure. Consistently executing the straight punch properly in a given form ensures that the practitioner maintain the ideal position throughout, preserving the integrity of the practitioner's own body.

Dynamic Balance

Forms also foster a dynamic sense of balance, facilitating the maintenance of the practitioner's stability while in motion. A vital consideration in combat lies in keeping one's center to prevent overextension and vulnerability to an opponent's attacks and counters. It is certainly easy enough to retain one's balance in a static, unmoving posture but quite a different matter to attempt the same while changing arm and leg positions. This is particularly crucial to actual combat where a slip or stumble could lead to disaster. Faced with a powerful or experienced opponent, the practitioner is then forced to fight to regain a stable position. This predicament is best remedied by keeping a sound posture and transitioning smoothly to others, a skill developed by the practice of forms.

Proper Breathing

It is universally acknowledged that proper breathing leads to the powerful delivery of martial arts techniques. In breathing in (the inhalation process), the practitioner charges up energy in preparation for an explosive release. In breathing out (exhalation), he in turn generates a great force to achieve the intended result on an opponent. By replenishing energy constantly through the inhalation-exhalation cycle, correct breathing prevents the practitioner from becoming unnecessarily exhausted. Forms training accustoms him to necessary variations in tempo: quick and hard breaths for single, focused strikes and longer, drawn-out breaths for multiple strikes delivered in succession.

Mental Focus

Forms are sometimes referred to as meditation in motion, focused thought maintained throughout the length of a given sequence. By properly executing his forms, a practitioner learns to concentrate his attention to the task at hand and avoid to distractions that may come about. This leads to fluency in, and mastery of, the techniques. Mental focus is also applicable in actual fighting, where the utmost concentration on an opponent is crucial because a potentially death-dealing blow may occur in the blink of an eye and not be blocked by the practitioner. As is often said, the most destructive blows are the ones you don't see coming.

Effective delivery

Finally, and perhaps most significantly to some, effective combat delivery is a natural byproduct of forms training. A primary goal in many a fighting art is the quick and efficient victory over an opponent. By securing for himself the ideal weapon-to-target alignment, the practitioner is able to place his anatomical weapon (foot, fist, elbow or knee) on its intended target for the greatest result. This is especially important in multiple-attacker scenarios wherein a misplaced blow on one attacker can lead to the others ganging up on and overwhelming the practitioner.

There is indeed a continuing relevance in the practice of forms in this modern age. While bag-hitting, contact sparring and ground grappling may seem more exciting and immediately fulfilling to the younger crop of martial arts practitioners, even a cursory view reveals the vast benefits of forms training for anyone. Ergonomic execution, dynamic balance, proper breathing, mental focus, effective delivery...choose your reason to execute your forms and go on to practice them diligently. Whether you are a kung-fu, karate, taekwondo or silat stylist or a practitioner of other arts, these sequences handed down by the old masters will vastly improve your overall martial skills. ☺



The 2007 Inside Kung-Fu Magazine Writer of the Year, **Jose G. Paman** is a Ngo Cho kung-fu and Kombatan arnis expert based in Northern California. He has written more than 100 articles as well as five books on the martial arts, including *Arnis Self-Defense* (Random House) and *Ngo Cho: Southern Shaolin Five Ancestor Kung-Fu* (Unique Publications). Paman can be reached care of: P.O. Box 352, North Highlands, CA 95660 USA.

The Filipino Martial Way: **Hiya**

By Felipe Jocano, Jr.

At some point in one's martial arts training, he or she will encounter issues in relationships with other martial artists that involve face. Face refers to one's perception of how he or she stands in relation to others. Face involves one's sense of *amor proprio* – a degree of personal sensitivity to one's position. It is a metaphor for how we see the way others see us – a social form of our physical faces.

Why is face so important for the martial artist? Because it reflects issues of accomplishment and individual standing: In the martial arts world, one's standing is based on one's achievements in his or her style. It follows that the more one has accomplished, the more one's status increases. One gains more face as a result. Accomplishments in the martial world may be based on any of several areas: being a consistent tournament champion; being well-known for having used his/her art in real-life situations; being an effective teacher; and so on. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it does reflect some of the many ways in which our arts have shaped the way we see ourselves and see others.

If our sense of face can be built up as a result of the recognition of our accomplishments by others, it also follows as well that it can be eroded as well when people refuse to give due recognition to what we have done or worse, denigrate or downgrade it. Thus, a well-known martial artist becomes the subject of whispering behind his/her back: "*Hindi naman talaga yan magaling.*" (He/she's not really that good); "*Ala yan, kayang kaya ko siya.*" (He/she's nothing, I can handle him/her); "*Kaya nanalo yan, niluto yung laban.*" (The reason he/she won is that they cooked the tournament [a slang term for arranging the outcome in advance]). The issue isn't whether these allegations are true of any martial artist or not – the issue is how these happenings affect us, both personally and in our relationships with others.

The sense of face is not, however tied exclusively to issues of recognition of accomplishments. The act of acknowledging or refusing to acknowledge, the existence of other people is another areas in which face matters a great deal. Thus, to greet someone is to give them face; to ignore someone you know well is to take away face.

Among the various terms in Pilipino, *hiya* seems to be the closest to the idea of face. While often translated as shame or embarrassment, *hiya* embodies more than these two emotional conditions. *Hiya* is part of the culturally constructed complex of emotional standards we call *damdamin* (literally feelings). *Damdamin* refers to the emotional imperatives that form part of our value system. *Damdamin* is an integral part of the process of judging an act as good or bad, its appropriateness, its justness (or not) and so on. *Damdamin* also forms part of the intuitive evaluative process we call *dating* (literally arrival). Thus, we say of a person who's coming on too strongly (as in loud and overbearing) "*Ang lakas ng dating!*" Similarly, a shy and timid person is "*Ang hina*

naman ng dating!” If someone does something we don’t like, we say “*Ang sama ng dating nun, ah!*” (Literally, that action came across negatively).

Hiya is tied to this whole complex of *damdamin* in that it is part of the emotional dimension of our relationship to other people. Thus, we judge relationships using *hiya* as part of the matrix of unspoken yet real norms. For example: “*Wag na, nakakahiya naman...*” may mean that the speaker is declining a favor because it may be potentially embarrassing for him/her to receive it – whether or not the speaker may actually want it. On the other hand, the speaker may be declining for formality’s sake, only to accept it when pressed to do so – and so that the giver *ay hindi mapahiya* (will not be put to shame) if the speaker stands firm on the refusal to accept the favor.

“*Napahiya ako!*” means that the speaker has been shamed. To utter this also means that the speaker is angered by the cause of his/her shame. Anger, apart from embarrassment and shame, may also factor in one’s expression of *hiya*. Under particular circumstances, *hiya* leads to anger, which in turn may lead to disruption of relationships, unless the situation is addressed. Corollary to this is the utterance “*wag mo akong hiyain!*” (Don’t embarrass me – which poorly captures the emotional nuances in the original phrase).

On the other side of the coin, while one’s social face is eroded because of *hiya*, it is also possible to be proactive and make sure that the other’s face is kept intact. “*Bigyan mo naman ng kahihyan*” is a reminder not to embarrass another person. While it literally means giving someone *hiya*, in this context it also means ensuring that the other’s face is kept whole – and if it were possible to add to that face by building up the person, then it should be done.

There are other many other nuances of *hiya* that cannot be addressed completely here – but the main question remains – what is the relevance of understanding *hiya* for the martial artist (of whatever art)? We do have to remember that our practice of martial arts is not solely about the pursuit of personal power, in this case defined as our capabilities to inflict harm or control it. Beyond the attainment of fighting or self-defense capability are questions of ethical behavior – in which the notion of *hiya* plays a part.

Thus, although we learn to become stronger and to develop our techniques, we should also learn to temper our character as well. In this case, it means that as we become more proficient in our martial art, we should also grow in our ability to get along with others. Although on the one hand, it means learning how to treat others well, it also means restraining one’s self from unduly embarrassing or shaming another without cause or reason.

This last phrase is a tricky one. At times, we will be in situations wherein no matter what we do or say, someone will be embarrassed. These may be unavoidable – but it is up to us to decide whether or not to seek out such situations. However, in most cases, we can always choose what to do with our relationship to someone else. It is because we have access to power that we are also responsible for what we do with it. If we can win and yet allow the other to keep his/her face, then we have acted responsibly with what we have learned.

Note: I am indebted both to my father, Dr. F. Landa Jocano, and to one of my professors, Dr. Elizabeth de Castro, for stimulating discussions on the nature of *hiya*, from the

perspectives of cultural anthropology and psychology respectively. Any mistakes made here are mine alone. ☺

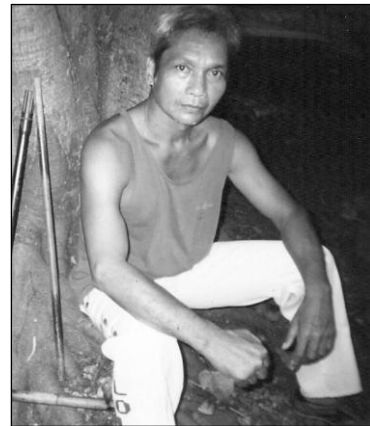
Further Reading: Jocano, F. Landa. 1997. *Filipino Value System: A Cultural Definition*. Metro Manila: Punlad Research House.

Filipino Martial Arts

The BDU System: Making Sense of Defense

By Bonifacio D. Uy

Although as eskrimadors we ought to know more than we do, the reason for our lack of knowledge is not difficult to understand. It is, in fact, so obvious that it is often overlooked. The simple truth is that students are merely made to copy what the teacher shows them. The student's unquestioning sub-servience and the teacher's highfalutin perception of his superiority among other reasons contribute to the students being reduced into mere automatons. Of course, there are the more blustering pseudo-masters. Nonetheless not all teachers may fail to explain to their students the reasons for what they must do. But even the more popular teachers are disinclined to give away important information to their followers. This state of affairs not only deprives students of excellent environs for growth but also make them an unwitting conduit for mediocrity through ignorance. Many eskrimadors, whose hunger for knowledge that remains insatiate might try to go it alone in their search for a synthesis. The few who manage to find their way would soon discover that not only must they struggle against deep-felt prejudice and apathy among fellow enthusiasts but they must also contend with the weightier matter of the influence of predominant notions of the more popular teachers.



To some eskrimadors defense means blocks. Some would want to include bobbing and weaving to the definition. All do some kind of footwork. On the idea of footwork practitioners differ. There are those who prefer boxing footwork. The problem

with this kind is that it is used only for disengagement or evasion. But since defense is what we want, well, I guess, this one is all right. There are those, on the other hand, who do the jumpy-jumpy stuff of Muay Thai and Tae Kwon Do. These two martial arts do kicks. In eskrima it is best to move around in order to present a moving target. Muay Thai and Tae Kwon Do both mark time when doing their jump. Still others advocate karate footwork as suggested in what they spread around as eskrima forms (*porma* or *sayaw*). But then again their footwork in sparring/stance/drills may look similar to karate but the similarity ends there. It is likely that the perceived likeness is in fact a copy and not incidental or even a "convergent evolution" type of thing and hence not some kind of true advocacy. It is therefore safe to assume that these people have reached the limit of their martial arts knowledge in general and eskrima learning in particular.

Anyway the prime thing is the blocks. In the good old days the block is aimed at the stick or intended for the arm of the attacker. This second modus operandi was deemed desirable. There was, though, seen some kind of difficulty in going for the arm in blocking. One is that, putting the block on the arm would still allow the weapon to go round and still hit the defender. Another is that, there is the likelihood that the attacker's arm during practice drills might receive a much harder blow than necessary. Be that as it may, in the years that followed what was the desirable block seems to have fallen by the wayside. Only grandmaster Momoy Cañete could be seen doing it in demos.

The ideal block is always followed by a disarm, combination strike, or lock. Any of the three counter moves could be labeled basic, depending on the teacher's preference. What really boggles the mind is why some teachers are inclined to put disarms in the class of basic when these things are even more complicated than they look? In wresting away a knife, for example, we not only must keep away from the dangerous pointed end and the equally hazardous sharp edge, we must also contort, sometimes our bodies in order to successfully complete the job. All of the above feat, of course, must be done with an accompanying footwork. Quite a stunt I think.

Let's look into the strike combination next. One to three blocking techniques may be assigned to a particular strike, or strike number. After the block, a strike combination may follow. There could be more than two strikes in one combination. Each strike combination may differ slightly from the other, i.e., A is not equal to BC; B is not equal to AC; C is not equal to AB. Because the combinations are dissimilar, remembering which mixture belongs to which block may pose quite a challenge to those who are less endowed mentally. Practicing these blocks with their attendant strike combination is tedious, to say the least. We need not crash into the nitty-gritty so as to forget these things. We need only to move on to other areas and in no time at all those strike sequences are past recall.

Then there is the newly found folly of holding the stick in the reverse fashion as a combination is performed. This is holding the stick so that the longer part protrudes out of the bottom of the fist. If the stick is an extension of the arm, then holding the stick in the reverse way reduces to its shortest the extension. But that is not the worst of the problems with this exercise. The way of hitting using this grip can never enable the eskrimador to deliver a powerful blow no matter how much he tries. The reason is that the manner of delivery, as much as the grip, produces to some degree motion suitable only when a person fillets fish. Such a hold I have never seen in any Kendo demo especially when cutting a piece of bamboo. Any eskrima teacher ought to know movies

are only for entertainment. What they see in Samurai movies ought not to influence their style. But what is more telling as far as ineffectiveness of the counter strikes is concerned is the willy-nilly nature of the delivery. There mostly are no instructions on how to deliver maximum power in the first place. And there is loose identification of fatal points in the person's body that is to be aimed at.

Another BDU system dictum is this: "A hammering effect to the strike produces the greater force". But I digress.... When as a student one of the most important things I was told I had to learn were the locks. To those locks are added now more holds whose worth is suspect. Locks that are being propagated now are not taught with foresight. Teachers are still wont to teach those that are complicated. The danger of such techniques is made plainer when the student is obliged to wrestle the opponent to the ground. Any collegiate wrestler who happens to watch such proceedings should be able to point out where the risk lies. Also with the growing popularity of MMA the possibility that the guy who the eskrima student wants to clamp a lock on might turn the tables on him has become greater. Any technique that the eskrimador wants to learn must go through the acid test of a hard and fast sparring.



Nonetheless, the blocks now seem to have devolved, where in years past in practicing defense against the stick, the long knife was always kept in the back of the mind; it is not the case now. The defense is now specific for the stick. The change is quite understandable. It is far easier for the teachers to invent techniques when the connection of the stick and long knife is cast aside. Presently anybody can do with the stick anyway he wants. Many have taken looking like band majors. Eskrima teachers have become thoughtless in their teachings.

Then there is the idea of blocking a short knife such as hunting knife, with a stick. I cannot help but frown on the wisdom of such exercise. At close range the knife is presumed deadlier than the stick. I think everybody is agreed on that. In a fight, if the attacker should elect to wrestle with the eskrimador before committing himself fully to using the knife, the stick would be rendered less effective as a weapon of defense. This was amply demonstrated in a fatal fight that took place near my place not too long ago.

An eskrimador waylaid a man, who was old enough to be his father, with his stick. The old man had no choice but to defend himself using his one-and-a-half inch work knife.(You read right, the knife had a blade of only 1.5 inch or 3.8 cm).The eskrimador died of multiple stab wounds in the chest. What happened in that fight should be a lesson to all eskrimadors.

What I have written above does not put the BDU system in a bind. Despite our advocacy of "preemptive attack", we still do blocks in order to round out our system. (See Rapid Journal Issue no.47 of 2008). It is in the blocks and more importantly in our training that we radically differ from the rest. Above all, the way of thinking that we nurture has enabled us to escape the debilitating clutches of tradition and some of the

detrimental influence of foreign martial arts doctrines that have kept eskrima from making relevant progress.

Another doctrine that we follow is: "The strike may be used as a block". Two advantages here are evident, namely: (1) the block would produce a force equal to or greater than the strike. The block, in order to stop or deflect a strike, must have a force equal to or greater than the blow and (2) the student would not have to memorize the mechanics of the block and also the totally different technique of a strike. The less information we must remember the better.

The only traditional block we use is what we call "double-ended block". The way of doing the block is by holding both ends of the stick in defending against a strike. The BDU System prefers this block because it may be used against most strikes aimed at any part of the body. And it is very strong to boot. In addition this may be used against the attacker who has grabbed the defender's stick while trying to hit with his own.

Some strikes ought not to be blocked. When a heavy weapon is used like a baseball bat or a rebar, or a crowbar, etc. and when it is swung using both hands, the block would not have enough stopping power to protect the defender. Some blocks are weak because the user is puny. Some blocks may fail because it was not done right in the first place. Some blocks are by nature frail, they should not even be considered. Looks should not be the standard by which a technique is measured. Popularity does not make for a good system.

With eskrima going international, perceptions must of necessity change. The mind must be liberated of old ideas. In the area of defense, for instance, it is not enough to come up with techniques that work only when light sticks are used-and only demos at that. There are many common household items that may be used as weapons. There are many tools that may be legally bought but could be used for murderous ends. And there are the weapons that could be manufactured at home. It is impossible to take stock of all of them and invent a technique for each. But it is wrong not to consider the broader picture. The word martial art is broad enough. So is survival, a broad enough term. Teaching techniques that are easy and safe may be desirable for the teacher but it is putting a lake into a small tub. Self-defense is the lake. Teaching techniques that work only when light sticks are used and only on willing partners is the tub. It is always the student that gets to pay for the teacher's narrow-minded approach to the art. And sometimes, it is with his life. ☹



Editorials

Ah! The Editorial is an expression of the owner, publisher or a guest writer of a magazine. The editorial is a way to express personal, ideas, opinions, or beliefs.

The Rapid Journal had some very interesting editorials which were thought provoking and some that would make the reader give thought or realization to their way of thinking.

The following are just a few that the FMA Digest chose for example. Just a reminder these were written at the time the particular issue came out.

Editor's Note



Volume9 No.4

One of the perks of editing a martial arts magazine is that you get to talk with martial artists from different styles. In these conversations you discover the new technology infused into martial arts practice and at the same time you have stories of personal triumph, perseverance and certain amount of disappointment and frustration over the political in-fighting in some martial arts organizations. Overall, the developments of martial arts in terms of technical skill, organization management and promotions have improved tremendously over the years.

However, there are some styles that remain unknown and hidden from the eyes of the public. The problem lies not in the quality or effectiveness of that particular style, but mainly due to the narrow-minded teachers and promoters of the style. In some styles, the teacher refuses to allow students to cross-train or even to show or share what they know with friends. The reason, according to the student, showing forms or whatever little skill you have will reveal the secrets of the style. This is quite unfortunate for the student because he will never know his level of achievement outside of his own sphere of martial arts style. This attitude also creates an environment of elitism and reinforces the notion of the myth of secrets in the martial arts. It may be true that there are 'secrets' in every martial arts system, but they are actually acquired through practice and proper guidance of the teacher. They cannot be gleaned just by casually watching someone doing a form or a technique or even by simply having a brief push hands or friendly sparring. Secrets are revealed once you have done your homework, that is, mindful practice.

Twenty-five years of age, I was introduced to Tai Chi Chuan by a schoolteacher who was in his 60s. He began his martial arts training late in his life (late 40s) under teachers who came from Taiwan. In spite of his age, he practiced hard and was commended by the instructors for his perseverance. Though he was not an expert martial artist, he knew enough to defend himself and develop a fit and healthy body. In his late 60s, he was still seeking out people with whom he would study and learn whether it was martial arts, qigong or painting.

One thing I learned from him was that he taught with all his heart, never keeping any secrets. He taught me all the forms that he knew and when he had nothing else to

offer, he sought out knowledgeable friends from other styles to teach me. Since he had little experience with push hands, he found three others who were willing to practice with me and they came from different backgrounds. He even found a younger Xingyiquan teacher to teach me the basics of the art. He has since passed away, but his legacy goes on in these pages. As long as one is willing to share one's knowledge and experience in any art, no matter how simple or complicated it might be, RAPID journal is here to serve as an outlet of your expression.

Teachers are usually happy to see their students excel in their field because it gives them a sense of pride and accomplishment. But in martial arts very few teachers are willing to relinquish their 'throne' even to their own student. Whatever reasons they might have, whether financial, fear of being overcome or just plain inflated ego, it does not augur well for the future of their students or martial arts. In the end, a 'secret' art becomes just that, a hidden art and eventually leads to obscurity.

Volume 10 No. 1

During the early years of publishing the journal, I was approached by a friend who was a practitioner of the contemporary art of Wushu. He was telling me to revise some of the articles on Tai Chi Chuan and others contained in the journal because, according to him, some readers found them difficult to understand and comprehend. At first I was surprised, but later on it dawned on me that my friend was, actually, not a "martial arts" practitioner but a "martial sport and exercise" enthusiast.

Having left the world of competitive sport (Wushu, Taijiquan event) 10 years ago, I discovered the tremendous gap between competitive combat sports (routine and sparring events) and traditional martial arts. It has even come to the point, as in the case of my friend, that certain martial arts concepts concerning body mechanics and alignment, yin-yang, internal energy, etc. have become unknown to the majority of the practitioners of these martial sports and exercises.

The original objective of the Chinese government or any other government promoting their indigenous martial arts was to provide greater access to the people their native art. The only way to do this was to standardize, simplify and turn into a sport or exercise these ancient arts as a spectator sport generated great publicity and public participation for these events, especially with their savvy marketing schemes of combining the ancient motif with modern looks and flashy movements to achieve maximum exposure and 'authenticity'. To give them credit, they have been quite successful in promoting these martial sports and people have been exposed to these events more than ever.

But to turn an Asian martial art into a competitive sport would require a radical departure from its original purpose. At first glance this may not be very obvious, but one must keep in mind that the Western concept of competition is foreign to most Asian martial arts. One does not train in traditional Wushu, aikido or pencak silat to achieve "*sitlus, altius, forius*" (Olympics motto of 'stronger, higher, faster'). In the old days in times of war and trouble, martial arts practitioners trained in order to survive. In time of peace, the focus of practice became self-defense, health, harmony and quest for personal enlightenment. By injecting the concept of competition the focus of practice programmed to achieve winning. Deadly techniques become flowery movements; proper breathing and

rhythm are greatly compromised in a race against time (staying within time limit); correct body alignment and body mechanics are sometimes sacrificed to achieve aesthetic considerations and spectacular moves for public consumption and so on and so forth.

Although two people may practice the same martial art (Wushu, Karate, Pencak Silat, etc.) they may not necessarily understand each other. The traditional practitioner will criticize the martial sport practitioner for being useless and flowery and the martial sport practitioner will have his own comments on the violent and secretive nature of traditional and martial sports, have different objectives and it is precisely because of these divergent goals that they are taught differently and so practice accordingly. Both have their own criteria of what is good or bad and right or wrong.

Who is right? Well, the final conclusion of this argument must be how both these arts will stand the test of time. Martial arts practice is greatly influenced by the political, social and economic environment. Who knows in a hundred years to come we may have a reversal of roles. But I guess that is a problem for the future martial artists.

Volume11 No.3

I've been going over the works of Stanley E. Henning, the noted Chinese martial arts historian, where he writes about the myths and legends surrounding the history of Chinese martial arts. Backed by citations from ancient literary and martial manuals, his critical analysis shatters the popular beliefs and stories found in main Chinese martial arts literature. But like David vs. Goliath, he is up against a huge institution, that of the Chinese authorities, who continue to perpetuate the myth of martial arts as seen in its commercial promotion of the Shaolin Monastery and the Wudang Temple as the main source of Chinese martial arts. His findings are often overshadowed by false stories that have permeated the walls of popular culture by way of martial novels, training manuals and film.

Many of the myths and legends found in Chinese martial arts were spun only during the last 150 years or so and much of these fabricated tales have been considered "history" by many including practitioners and even some academic scholars. It would take a number of honest-to-goodness researchers and a lifetime to overcome this trend.

Filipino martial arts history has its share of myths and legends. Much of pre-colonial history is based on oral tradition. Even during the Spanish colonial period there are only a few written records, mostly by priests, of Filipino martial culture. Most of them describe the warrior, his outfit, his weapon, his ways of warfare, but there is no mention of a 'style' or 'system' for doing battle or protecting oneself. Without any written document or a recorded oral transmission of the art, many practitioners have a tendency to fabricate their own stories by attributing their art to some ancient or mythical warrior of the past.

Here lies the danger when historical events or personalities are bent to conform with certain attributes of the art. One such person is the legendary Lapu-Lapu, who has become the standard bearer of almost all Filipino martial arts. He has become the champion of Filipino martial arts, a Master of Kali, an indigenous art practiced before the arrival of the Spaniards. And what of the many styles that have sprouted recently as a result of the boom in Filipino martial arts, most of them have supposedly come from family arts passed in from one generation to another. How true are all these claims?

It is important that we scrutinize and discern what is true or false and not just swallow everything that is presented before us. As the eminent historian, Ambeth Ocampo would tell us regarding the Code of Kalantiaw which was supposedly an authentic pre-colonial code but subsequently proven to be fake he has this to say: *“History is built on authority and sometimes we act like the people in the fairy tale ‘Emperor’s New Clothes.’ We see nothing but we are told otherwise. It takes courage to tell the world that the emperor’s new clothes simply do not exist.”*

Since Filipino martial arts is at a stage ready for take-off, it might be wise to examine some of the historical basis of our claims before it comes to a point where imagination becomes reality which is already happening. The longer it takes the more difficult it is to undo the mindset of the general public as well as avid practitioners of the art.

Guest Editorials

Volume10 No.2

Ten years looking back, I believe it was in the latter part of 1996 that I picked up the first issue of Rapid Journal at the National Bookstore Super branch in Cubao. The first article that I browsed, if I remember it right, was *“Close Encounters of the Fake Kind”* by Professor Felipe “Bot” Jocano Jr. Being an avid collector of martial arts literature, I felt happy that again, someone had picked up the torch of chronicling the local martial arts scene. Rapid Journal’s feat of staying afloat for a decade was unprecedented in the history of martial arts publication in the Philippines. Being an independent journalist who knows the horrors and cost of publishing, I can honestly say that Rapid Journal is a labor of love. Prior to Rapid, two martial arts magazines were brave enough to publish locally, one was published by Jafaha Publications during the 70s and the other was the song hits-size, Martial Arts Magazine circulated during the 80s.

Liking the format of the Journal, I wanted to write for Rapid from that moment on. After a number of months and through some twist of events, I was finally introduced to the publisher and editor Daniel Go by Dr. Ned Nepangue in 1997. Rapid Journal at that time served not only as podium for local martial arts writers and practitioners but a link between them as well. Dr. Nepangue’s residence in Sta. Mesa then became an informal meeting place of martial artists who wrote or were featured in the journal. It was low profile, yet high quality group that includes the late Guro Rene Capampangan of Baraw Sugbu (then coined as Armes Diablo), Mon Rivera, Sammy Chau and Vince Borrromeo to name a few. Another opportunity when one can see important personas of Philippine martial arts circle was every time Mr. Go throws a party for the Rapid group. This is where you see exotic styles and techniques not typically found on your typical martial arts school.

The name RAPID was originally an acronym for Research and Propagation for Internal Arts Development and the journal was first intended to cater primarily to internal arts practitioners. But eventually, it became a chronicler of authentic Filipino martial arts

as well. The motivation behind the latter undoubtedly was Mr. Go's commendable sense of patriotism. It's a seed that sprouted well and produced good fruits. Now, few can argue that Rapid has become an authoritative reference for the FMA community around the world when it comes to Philippine martial arts history and practices.

I should say that individuals within the Rapid group then and now do not necessarily agree with each other always, though mutual respect and admiration were always present. The approaches were a myriad too, some focus on the historical aspect, some on the spiritual, some on the aesthetic, some on the practical, some on the tactical and some on the sports facet. And I guess that's where the journal's strength lies, in variety. Diversity will always challenge conformity that leads to complacency. If I was asked "what was the single most important contribution of Rapid Journal in its 10 years of existence," I will say that it provided an opportunity and a venue to question what was taught to us through the years, particularly in the area of martial arts history, Filipino or otherwise.

As we start a new decade, new ideas will come to us through the pages of Rapid Journal. Whether we agree or disagree is insignificant, what is important is we dare to scrutinize and if not follow blindly. Our conclusions may differ but the experience will definitely enrich us both as martial artists and individuals in the end.

Volume10 No.4

The Marginality of the Martial Arts

Guest Editorial

By Felipe Jocano Jr.

The role of the martial artist is an anomalous one. His or her chosen avocation (and for a few, a vocation) is one learning a thousand and ways to restrain, hurt, disable, maim (even kill), another human being. The appeal of such knowledge is puzzling to other ordinary staid citizens in our society. What use is there, for instance, in learning hand to hand combat, stick and sword fighting, and knife combat when a gun can surely accomplish the goal of winning a fight much faster? This is the point of view of many aforementioned ordinary citizens.

Why are martial arts seen as somewhat marginal to other activities in contemporary urban Philippine society? Because there interests; these avocations are about the arts of war. In a peaceful and otherwise peace-oriented society, these arts are looked upon with a bit of puzzlement and even with fear.

Consider how our society has evolved in the last few hundred hears. In early pre-Hispanic times, the *bagani* or warrior had a very well defined role. The *bagani* were a warrior class charged with the protection of the *barangay*. These duties included not only defense but also raiding enemy territory. Rank and status among the *bagani* were defined by the number of enemies killed personally, usually by beheading. Consequently, skill arms was one of the distinctive characteristics of the warrior class.

Flash forward to the twenty-first century. The *bagani* as a class are no more. We now live a more or less egalitarian society, run according to democratic principles. For the majority of Filipinos, there is no warrior class, except among the communities that still maintain a connection with their traditions, e.g., among the Muslim communities for example. Yet, the arts of the warriors still remain, handed down over the centuries.

Admittedly, these are not exactly the same as those of our ancestors. Nevertheless, these are still practiced today, transmitted from father to son and from teacher to student.

These arts are still practiced, but the context in which they are now being practiced has changed drastically. The role of the warrior has been split into specialties and made the province of paid professionals. This, the warrior's role has been given to the soldier, the policeman and in the case of the private sector, the security specialist. Not all of these professional specialists train in the martial arts, as we know them today.

There remains the civilian martial artists, who may hold down a full-time job or else be still in school, who may or may not be single, and whose circle of friends may be defined by whom one trains with. These are ordinary people for whom the martial arts are a consuming passion, but whose pursuit of that passion sets them apart from other members of their communities. These are people who are part of an everyday world, but whose devotion to a singular activity sets them apart. These include the readers of the journal.

The devotion to martial arts practice is not an easy one to explain. For most of us, the pursuit of the martial way began with the felt need to protect oneself (certainly I felt that need). Somewhere along the way, it transcended the need for self-protection and became an end in itself. Suddenly here is a new world waiting to be explored, one in which skill and self-mastery becomes the defining quality of who one is and why one exists.

The route to self-mastery and the skills needed along the way is not an ordinary one. Although no census has yet been taken, it is certain that the number of active martial artists, regardless of age, constitutes a small fraction of the entire Filipino population. Among others, this may point to the fact that martial arts activity requires an investment not only in effort but also in time and money. In terms of effort alone, many martial arts teachers I have spoken to narrated to me how tire and again many beginning students drop out of training; only a few from each beginning class have committed themselves to following the martial way. It is simply a lot of hard, tedious, repetitive work.

Time is another factor to consider. In order to attain mastery of the movements in a style, one has to be willing to devote untold hours of that same hard, tedious, repetitive work just to get the body to respond instantly upon demand. When considering what this means in terms of balancing different demands upon one's personal time, choices have to be made, many of which have consequences further down the line. Most of these are felt in social relationships. Many young martial artists I know have had to make the choice between their girlfriend/ boyfriend/ spouses and training time, with the result that gradually they stopped coming to the gym to train. Happy are those whose significant others understand the role of martial arts in their lives and allow them the space to train; happier still are those whose significant others also train alongside them.

The same is true of monetary investment in training. Some have to pay monthly or even per session fees to their teacher. Others may train for free. If equipment is a necessity, as in Arnis for example, then this adds to the cost of training. Maintenance has to be paid for, since equipment may wear out and have to be replaced.

Not many people will understand why we invest so much to attain goals that they do not understand. *Para saan ba 'yan?* Is an often heard question. *Makakain mo ba 'yan?* Is also asked with varying degrees of sarcasm. Most cutting of all, *Huuu, 'ala 'yan, sa .45 lang, tapos ka na!* Is the remark of the skeptic. Such comments reflect a pragmatic

approach to the challenges of getting by on a daily basis. The necessity of making a living often precludes the capacity to train as hard and as often as one would wish: Time is literally money.

This may account for another observation: that it is difficult to make a living teaching martial arts on a full-time basis. There are not enough people who are collectively interested enough in martial arts training to be able to support a teacher full-time. Time spent in learning martial arts may well be exchanged instead for furthering one's career. Given the state of the economy, not all who are interested in learning martial arts will have the necessary income to meet the expenses involved and support their teachers as well. These teachers in turn will have a regular job that pays their bills; if they charge fees for training, these fees tend to supplement their income. Most teachers will therefore teach on a part-time basis. Very few teach on a full-time basis and earn enough to support themselves and their families.

For many of us then, following the path of martial arts puts us on the margin; at least as far as explaining what we do when we're not at work, study or family is concerned. For others, life on the margins of explanations is not enough. Thus, to make a career out of martial arts, many practitioners enter more mainstream careers, such as teaching for the military and the police. Some actually do enter the armed forces or join the ranks of law enforcement. Others work in the private security industry, and still others work as health and fitness trainers, using martial arts skills in their work. Martial art-based sports are now becoming well known, with many practitioners competing to earn positions on national teams.

As martial artists, being on the margin does provide a useful perspective from which to view how we live. Martial arts are about life and death; the stark reality of preparation for combat that hopefully will never come, also forces us to evaluate carefully the choices we make and the priorities we have set for ourselves. The grim possibility of death makes us take responsibility for our actions and to be aware at all times, we are accountable, if not now in the life to come. Martial arts are about being humble every day, in order to learn and to grow not only in skill but also in character and in relating to others. Not all of our daily activities force us to this level of awareness; but hopefully our practice of martial arts helps us bring this kind of awareness to everything else that we do, thereby making us better people than when we first started.

**Editor's
Note**



Volume 14 No.1

Last issue I mentioned an ongoing project on Arnis propagation and promotion to be launched by a group of FMA practitioners with the help of media and a businessman. It was supposed to spearhead a move to help Arnis become a national sport thru legislation. Well, for the past several weeks, we have been overcome by problems that grabbed the attention of the people and politicians. So again issues like the promotion of FMA are set aside again for the nth time.

So what is the future of FMA here in the Philippines? One of the reasons, why the journal took the path of featuring FMA was to serve as an outlet for dedicated practitioners here in the country who wanted to share their art with fellow Filipinos. For many years, FMA practitioners here in the country have relied on FMA literature published in the United States. What we had here then was a few press releases on Arnis tournaments and some rehashed materials adapted from articles that appeared in foreign magazines. I was hoping that with the introduction of this journal we would be able to upgrade the quality of written material with regard to FMA.

After more than a decade of publication, I can truly say that the journal has contributed much to the deeper understanding of FMA. Aside from the technical description of movements, concepts have been presented to further explain the essence of FMA. Historical facts have come to light to help us distinguish between reality and myth. Not so well known personalities have been introduced showing that FMA is still alive and kicking in this nation.

But after all this, why is there so little interest with FMA coming from the general public? I say this based on the feedbacks I get from the journal. Most of them come from foreigners or Filipinos based abroad. There are hardly any feedbacks in the local front except for some dedicated practitioners who ended up contributing articles to the journal. I have also observed that several teachers of FMA have been promoting their art outside our borders. They have literally become overseas workers having seminars every year in countries like the United States, France, Israel, Singapore, etc. There are hardly any books on FMA published here (except for some self-published work). Aside from Remy Presas' book on Arnis published more than 20 years ago by National Bookstore, no book on FMA has been printed by any of the big publications in the country.

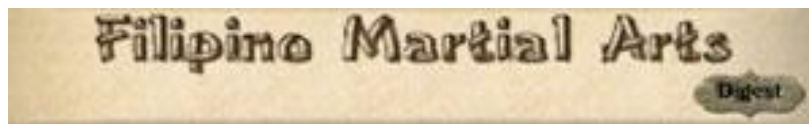
So where's the market for FMA? I am afraid it's not here in the Philippines but outside of the country. As long as we continue to disregard our own history and retain our third-world mindset, we will never recognize the value of our cultural heritage. With the exodus of many FMA teachers each year, it's only a matter of time before we start seeking lessons of Filipino martial arts in some foreign country. Not really a bad idea in this era of globalization, but most unfortunate due to our apathetic attitude and lack of appreciation for our own indigenous art.

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The last issue has yet to come out. It is highly suggested visiting the Rapid Journal website (www.RapidJournal.com) often until it comes out.



For back issues of Rapid Journal visit (www.RapidJournal.com) or (www.berdugo.us)



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