

Filipino Martial Arts

Digest

Special Issue
2007

Kali - Eskrima - Arnis

Arnis: A Question of Origins

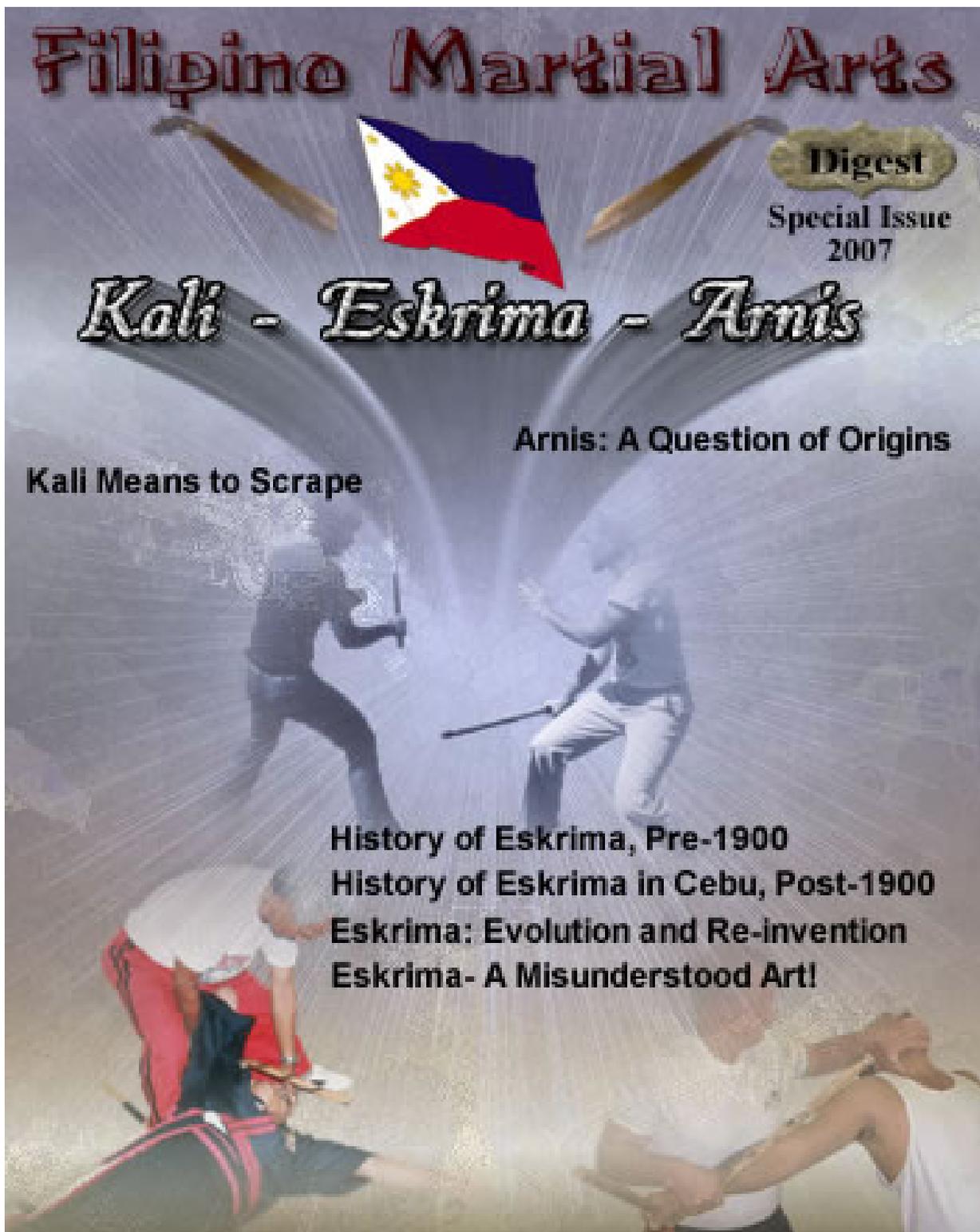
Kali Means to Scrape

History of Eskrima, Pre-1900

History of Eskrima in Cebu, Post-1900

Eskrima: Evolution and Re-invention

Eskrima- A Misunderstood Art!



Publisher

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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

This is a Special Issue that will raise some eyebrows. It seems that when you talk of Kali, Eskrima, or Arnis, there is controversy on where they came from and what they are about. And when you finally think you have the ultimate understanding then you find little things that add, change, subtract from the overall concept.

Well in this Special Issue the FMA Digest obtained permission from the authors to take their explanation, some published years ago. However what is good about this is that the authors have gone over what they wrote before and have updated it and straightened out some of their thoughts on the subject. So you can find their old articles and see the added or changed concept of the original.

Leo Gaje, Jr talks about Kali, Steven Drape talks about Eskrima, and Bot Jocano talks about Arnis. Each is very interesting. Also, included in this issue; Nick Papadakis, talks about his documentary Kali Means to Scrape, which is very interesting and he offers it to the public, if you are interested in purchasing a copy.

Overall, I think this issue is very good for the person that really does not know about Kali, Eskrima, or Arnis. And for those readers that have knowledge it may add just a bit more.

Some would ask this should have been a Special Edition! Well the FMA Digest struggled with this, but has come to the conclusion that even when you think something is set in stone, it really is constantly changing for there is always other Grandmasters, Masters, styles of the Filipino martial arts that are not known and that will make Kali, Eskrima, and Arnis constantly change.

The FMA Digest thinks the authors have given some very good information and it is most definitely worthwhile sharing it with you the reader.

Maraming Salamat Po



Kali

By: Grand Tuhon Leo T. Gaje, Jr.
Edited and Provided By: Ron Kosakowski



Kali is the true Filipino culture and discipline expressed in the principles of respect, concern and care represented by the carrying of the Kalis as the status symbol of every Kayumanggi living in the Island. "Kayumanggi," is the original name of the now called Filipino nationality, long before they were referred to as Filipinos." Kali was originally a Hindu influence brought to the Islands over 800 years before the Majapahit Empire that ended back around 1500 AD. The influence of Kali as a culture was deeply rooted among the inhabitants of the 7,100 Islands. It was a culture because it expresses the Philosophy of life with the elements of belief that only life no death, success no failure and good health no sickness. Its not that every human being doesn't feel this way, it

is a strong mentality and belief in this philosophy what keeps the Philippine warrior alive and very healthy. That is because Kali, as a belief, is also a metaphysical energy. If and when you will further your study with Pekiti Tirsia you will then understand the effect of Kali in the area of metaphysics.

Kali, the word can be authenticated in the use of the Filipino language. A Filipino alphabet includes the word Ka as the first letter words of Tagalog is expressed in A-BA-KA-DA-E-GA-LA-MA-NA-SA-TA-U-WA-YA. There is no C in Filipino replacing the letter K with significantly meaningful to the culture of the true discipline, the Kali culture. The word Ka is a prefix meaning Sir, Your Highness, Your Majesty, Your Excellency. Then the word "KALI" is also a prefix to words that describe as adjectives like KALIPAY MEANS HAPPINESS, KALIBUTAN THE WORLD, KALISUD MEANS SADNESS and KALIRUNGAN MEANS KNOWLEDGE AND MORE. Not meaning that KALI, the martial art, is the prefix to these words...this just shows that KALI as a word, is in the language and a part of the culture. And in Negros Occidental in the mountainous town of Salvador Benidicto, the yearly celebration of Kalikalihan is held every February, every year and this has been done for the past 15 years.

A Kali landmark is found in the Island of Panay called KALIBO, capital city of Aklan province and KALINGA-APAYAO, the province in the north of Luzon representing the indigenous artifacts and tribes that till today still practices Kali under the system called Peka-Peka and in the Island



close to Mindoro Island to Manila where the inhabitants still practice the system called ALIMASAG KALI.

Kali as a fighting system was kept secret when the Governor Disilio of Manila back in 1776 threatened the Filipino people, “all citizens should not mentioned the word Kali, and carrying of the Kalis was forbidden or else they will be arrested and brought to prison.” So the inhabitants kept it and under the pretext of a cane with pointed blade inside the cane. The Filipinos encountered the Spanish soldiers with these weapons which in turn, a lot of Spanish soldiers died. That was a major factor that ignited the Filipino/Spanish revolution in the Philippines which lasted till 1889. This is when Spain lost the revolution and then saved the face of King Philip and Queen Isabella by selling the Filipinos to the Americans in the Treaty of Paris of 1889.

Kali was and still is to this day, considered to be a sacred art by the Filipino people. Every drop of blood that falls to the ground from the Kali warrior was dedicated to the Gods with the utmost promise to revenge and to avenge the death of the Kali warrior. It is well known today that the Kali warriors didn't stop fighting even when a bullet was piercing through their bodies. This is the real proof of the Kali warriors, deep in the provinces of the Philippines, who were true to their beliefs in their philosophy, continued to kill the Spanish soldiers until they won. That is because that strong belief in life and success made them invincible warriors. Kali was so sacred that due to the many different metaphysical practices. The power to disappear in front of the enemy. The power to hack with the Kalis and cut a body in half. This did not exclude the cutting right into a Spanish helmet as well as cutting into the Spanish Toledo blades in half. If the Filipino warrior was injured there was and still is, the use of special oil to stop the bleeding that would occur during the close quarter encounters. It is well known by many Filipinos about the use of the metaphysical power by killing the enemy at a distance.



Kali warriors of today carry the spirit of the forefathers who watch the activities of every person that teaches or professes the Kali as their own fighting system. It is strongly believed they watch with care and concern that nobody abuses or commercializes the system with the intention of forgetting the Philippines and by remembering the duty to help the children, the poor families and the indigents whose life is miserable because of extreme poverty. Few have met their destiny in the USA as well as in the Philippines because of the wrongful use of Kali. The few had their destiny died in a premature death because they rejected the responsibilities and ignored the power of Kali. Not to mention those people without sense of gratitude and/or the recognition to the old men who taught the true warriors of the Philippines.

As you can see, Kali is a very powerful martial art compared to many of the other Asian martial arts from the physical and to the metaphysical elements of combat. In modern times, this is proven fact because, for the past six years, the Force Recon Marines training under the Pekiti-Tirsia Kali System in the Philippines, there has been no casualties against the many encounters in Mindanao Islamic rebel wars. It is important to

understand that once the purity of the practices are followed religiously then there are the feelings of security and confidence within the atmosphere of training and in the execution of Kali techniques. But if Kali is practiced with the mixture of the word Arnis and Eskrima, which are Spanish words, then the wisdom of the martial art will never find the ancient Filipino purity in a person's heart.



Kali, as well as Kun Tao has a long history as successful fighting methods and as a lifestyle in the Philippines. It was the Kali warriors that killed Ferdinand Magellan; as a matter of fact, the research done by the oldest University in the Philippines, UST-University of Santo Thomas recently found evidence that the name of the Datu that killed Ferdinand Magellan is Kalikulapu. So it is evident that the KALI word was significant long before the changes that were made back in 1521. These latest findings by the Arts and Museum of the Philippines, the Laguna Copperplate in the beach shore of Laguna de Bay close to Manila, explains the engraved writings in Babayin, the original Filipino language.

Now, after hearing how Kali is a very common word in the Filipino language and present in the true Filipino culture, you can see how Kali is also a Filipino sense of courage within the culture. It is well known that the Filipinos cannot be united religiously, politically or socially. But if there is war to fight, all Filipinos can be easily united together in force to fight against any nation of the world if need be.

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"Kali Means to Scrape"
A Film by Nick Papadakis
December 10, 2005

North Hollywood, CA - The Martial Arts History Museum was proud to present a special screening of the soon-to-be released documentary "Kali means to Scrape" this newly produced film was created by producer Nick Papadakis.

"Kali means to Scrape" shows the reality of men who fight with blades and the culture that surrounds it. What are revealed are their strength, their brutality, and their humanity. The

documentary explores how Filipino men have taken their means of survival and forged it into a higher art. Baston, Escrima, Arnis and Kali are some of the names given to these skills that go beyond being a martial art.

The documentary was recently filmed in the jungles of the Philippines with elderly masters of the Filipino arts sharing their experiences and providing unusual learning methods.

The FMA Digest reported this event in Vol3 No2, and talked with Mr. Nick Papadakis about doing an article on the film that he has made. The following is the article to just give you the reader a taste of what Mr. Papadakis went through to make this film and a brief on what it is about. If you have a chance to obtain and view this film it is highly recommended that you do.

What can I say about a film except watch the film. However, I was asked to write about it. It is called "Kali Means to Scrape". What does the title mean? See the film. I am only being partially difficult. I did not know of any films about Filipino martial arts so I made one. If a film is half way good, it looks easy to make and people will say, "I can do



that” Well, you are right. You can and should. That is what I did. However, It was not easy to make. It took eighteen days to shoot and 2 years in Post Production. Actually that is a lie. It was shoot in about eight days but took 10 days to convince the people to open up to me and two years to edit, due to the voice-overs, writing and recording the music. Oh ya don’t forget cover art and DVD art. All the verbiage for the cover and DVD too.

Often times when you shoot a documentary you have your thesis already in mind. Sometimes you write a script according to your research and then go and shot images that reinforce your thesis. You gather as much info as you can. I felt that form could have more biases so I opted to go the other route. I took my camera and just turned it on. I would capture as much as possible. Some things made more sense when I shot them; some things did not make sense until I watched them over and over again at home. Upon coming home, I had the daunting task of creating a story line. Although, the documentary happened the way it is presented. The time line was juggled in order to make a more cohesive storyline for the viewer. It was not important to me to make a video encyclopedia of styles and techniques. I wanted to capture the feel, show the things I loved about art. That was the informal nature of art, the personalities, and art of the art.

Day one of shooting: As I came down for breakfast with my gear ready to begin. The locals said, “Don’t worry about shooting today. “Swim, have lunch, enjoy the beauty that is the Philippines” They were right it is beautiful. However, one way to not enjoy a place is to tell someone to enjoy it, right now.

Day two of Shooting: as I can do for breakfast with my gear ready to begin. The locals said, “Don’t worry about shooting today. “Swim, have lunch, enjoy the beauty that is the Philippines” They were right it is beautiful. However, one way to not enjoy a place is to tell someone to enjoy it, right now. And so on.

Day three of shooting: I am starting to get it. I did not come down with my equipment this time. I sat down to coffee and enjoyed a nice conversation with the locals. I found out many things about the culture and how the art is practiced. After a full day of eating, swimming and conversation, I believed myself to be calibrated to the vibrations of the island, i.e. chilled out and receptive.

Finding my first Bastonero: Walking along the street of Murcia in Negros Occidental, I came across an old man. This man was skin and bones and was smoking a cigarette and walked with a cane. He looked like he was ninety years old. My guide introduced and said he was a Bastonero. That cane must have had more uses than to walk with. We asked if he would show us something. He swung his cane in a simple almost dismissive manor. My guide said in Ilongo “No really swing it so he can see the art. There came the angles although short in duration. I was able to see the art in a few motions. It was well worth it to talk to the old man. He was tired and had to stop. We walked on.

The Good, The Bad and the Gaje - Grand Tuhon Leo Gaje or Grand Tuhon Leo T.
Gaje as he known to his friends appears in the film and shows us how he was trained by his Grandfather, Conrado Tortal. Whenever, I pointed the camera at him; he obliged with a performance worthy of an Oscar. However, I don’t think he is acting. He has an ability



to be in the moment just like his art of Pekiti Tirsia. As it was taught me the object is not to learn pattern after pattern, but to react, act and move even when you don't have an answer for an attack. The mere act of not freezing can be a solution.

I would never speak for someone else however, it seems that just as I might call action or rolling; I want to see something happen. When

Grand Tuhon Gaje picks up a stick, sword or knife it is not to stand around and do nothing. It always has purpose. It is a performance it is to make a point. You can see it in the film. Kali is for the bold.

Common Men with Uncommon traits:

The art of these men was not always flashy and sometimes ugly in terms of our modern matrix influenced demo tournament culture, although I am quite certain anyone of these men would not have any trouble landing a full power shot on me at any time. I marveled at their jovialness as they talk about their art, but how willing they were to take on any challengers. There was no arrogance just matter of a fact. No need for them to hold a grudge, debate or discuss. Just action.

The music of the film: The music supervisor was Phillip "Fish" Fisher of Fishbone fame. He was in charge of creating a musical landscape that was as varied as the Philippines themselves. The Philippines being a place where East meets West and old meets new. We decided to start out with a few acoustic guitar standards. We used two guitar players named Gerard Garcia and Neil Saurez to create the traditional sounds. Of which I can be heard playing a third guitar and bass. Then Dave Rothburgh wrote the more ambient compositions. The songs include the Good, the Bad and the Gaje, The Duel and the jazz driving music. For the modern rhythmic modern sounds come from the band, Helios Jive. They created the music for the intro historical documentary. The background music for my stickmaking shop, and travel music. It is not an accident that so much jazz has made it into movie.



Jazz is well known for its improvisational aspects just as the arts of the Philippines are known for the ability to adapt and create on the spot. The rapper Deploi was employed to create the overall theme of the movie “Kali Scrapin” a Wu Tang Clan-esque rap about the realities of one on one combat. I feel like Kali always needed a good theme and this one is it.

Some of the Musicians Pictures:



The two guys are Helios Jive
www.heliosjive.com



The guy with the skullcap is Deploi
www.deploi.net



The Guy with the Soulpatch is Dave Rothburgh



The Drummer is Phillip “Fish” Fisher

The last words of the film:

You will be a righteous man always, you are not a troublemaker, you don't provoke anybody, you defend the helpless, you can inflict damage to them physically, and using Kali you have the right to defend yourself

What others have said about the Movie:

This DVD takes you on a journey into the heart of stick fighting, Dog Brother Nick "Pappy Dog" Papadakis captures the past and present Kali culture in the Philippines with an intimacy like no other Kali film has to date. With quality cinematography and production, “Kali means to scrape” allows the viewer, whether an avid practitioner or virgin of the art, to become inspired. “Kali Means to Scrape” was originally shown to me, with pride, by Guro Dan Inosanto. Enough said!

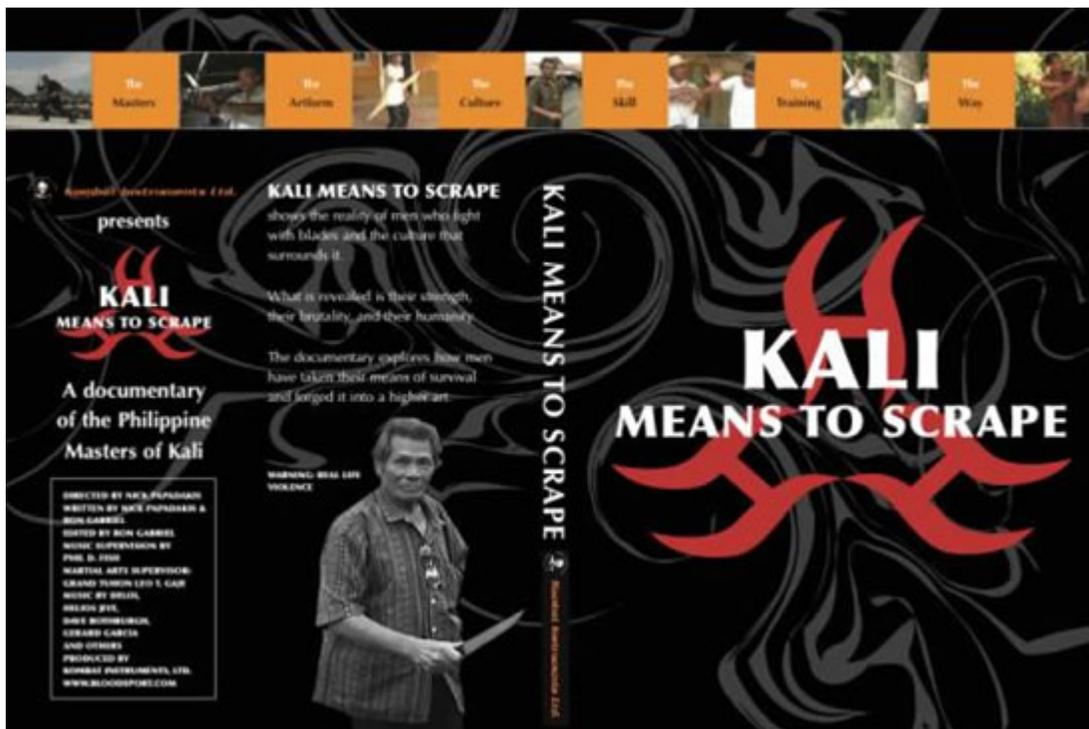
Tony

Wow, what a cool insider view of Filipino knife culture, Nick really hit it on the head with this one, few of us ever get a chance to visit the mecca of the Blade arts let alone allowed to hear the stories from the masters them selves, I was impressed at their humility and simple but honest approach to mortal combat, the images can be as humorous as they are disturbing. If you have not yet seen this documentary you are really missing something. Just my .02

Dave

I just received and viewed your new video "Kali Means to Scrape". It was terrific. It is so refreshing to see the real thing. Kali, escrima, arnis or whatever name it is called is not a gentlemen's sport. It is about life or death survival. Thanks for portraying it as it really is.

George



To Purchase this DVD

Kali Means to Scrape
\$35

[Click Here to Buy](#)

Contact: Nick Papadakis
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www.bloodsport.com

Eskrima

By Steven Drape

A Misunderstood Art!

When eskrima (or arnis, kali, etc.) was first introduced to America, it was done mainly as a seminar art. Of course there were a few schools, mainly near large Filipino communities around the country, but the majority of martial artists were not exposed to the Filipino arts until Remy Presas, Leo Gaje, Dan Inosanto and others began doing seminars. Unfortunately, to make the Art more marketable, the way it was presented often caused people to get some wrong ideas about what the Art really is. In some cases, the Art was simplified to make it easier for seminar students to learn; in other cases, things were actually changed to fit the legal climate of the US. One of the biggest mistakes was in marketing the Art as an add-on to other arts. Many magazine articles were written stating how much stick training had added to someone's Tae Kwon Do, or Jujitsu. This helped foster a climate where today, even some instructors believe some of these incorrect ideas heard over the years. This article will attempt to explode a few of the most common fallacies about the Filipino martial arts.

Some of the most common misperceptions/fallacies about the Filipino martial arts are:

- 1) That fighting ranges exist as specific and separate areas of instruction.
- 2) That training beginners in double stick exercises can "create" ambidexterity, or develop fighting skills in the off-hand at the same time as in the strong hand.
- 3) That knife training (learning disarms, offensive and defensive techniques) can make the practitioner able to fight with a knife without suffering injury in a real encounter.
- 4) That stick techniques cannot be executed at extremely close range.
- 5) That eskrima is only a weapons art, not a complete fighting system.

1. That fighting ranges exist as specific and separate areas of instruction

The idea that there are specific and separate fighting ranges, and that practitioners only focus on and train in one range (i.e., long range, middle range, short range) is untrue. The fact is that any particular style developed due to the restrictions of the local terrain and the body type and physical ability of its creator, but nearly every real encounter involves all fighting ranges at some point.

Eskrimadors from heavy forest or jungle areas developed thrusting styles and used longer sticks, because slashing and striking were not practical in the heavy foliage. Movement would also be completely dependent on the vegetation.

The styles that developed in the rice farming areas used linear footwork patterns, where circular and sidestepping movements were impossible, because the small raised paths between each rice paddy limited the options. The eskrimador could not make very heavy strikes as well, because the ground would be slippery, so the style basically focused on blocking techniques and middle range, measured blows.

The styles that developed on open areas or plantations were able to take advantage of the terrain and use more aggressive slashing and striking attacks, along with more complicated footwork. These practitioners would have begun at long range, looked for

openings and then closed to middle or short range to strike. If they were still able, they would have immediately moved back out to long range to prepare a new attack.

The systems that today claim to be close-range developed within the cities. Fighting in doorways, alleys and small open areas dictated the length of the weapon and the most effective techniques. The increased use of the stick instead of the blade also dictated a closer range, because now one can grab the stick, where a blade demands more room. If these eskrimadors were taken out of the city to one of the other types of terrain mentioned above, their fighting style would have quickly adapted, because a close-range, urban style in heavy jungle or in wide-open fields would have been disadvantageous if the practitioner had no closing or other long range skills. The same is true in reverse- the jungle fighter would have quickly shifted to a more effective style after moving to the city.

The point to be made is that eskrima is a style of fighting that takes whatever the environment gives, and makes it work. To call oneself an eskrimador is not to limit oneself to a single fighting range or a particular weapon, and any system that makes that distinction is doing a disservice to its practitioners. Real fights constantly flow back and forth between all three ranges and one must be prepared to handle whatever happens, wherever it happens!

2. That training beginners in double stick exercises can “create” ambidexterity, or develop fighting skills in the off-hand at the same time as in the strong hand.

The idea that, beginners should begin practicing with their offside hand to become ambidextrous, or the idea that the sinawali (as it is taught in the US) is going to make someone a good fighter with his off-hand is ridiculous. The fact is to learn to fight effectively with even one’s strong hand takes years of instruction and practice. To make the claim that one can be a better fighter by taking practice time away from the strong hand is silly. Some people ask, “What happens if your strong hand is injured during the fight?” Think about it- if your opponent was good enough to injure your strong hand, or disarm you, what makes you think that your weaker hand would have even a remote chance against his attack? A practitioner’s time would be better spent working on his empty-hand vs. weapon techniques, since that at least has applications of its own. Even the idea that the skill will transfer to empty hand fighting is flawed, because in any style of fighting, there are strong /weak sides, and a fighter will always adjust his style to take advantage of his strong side.

Even in the Philippines, double stick fighters are very rare, and among those who do use double sticks, the style often consists of using one stick strictly as a blocking tool while fighting with the other. There is nothing wrong in doing the sinawali drills (or the broken six, or the heaven and earth, or whatever a particular style calls it), but it should never be presented to students as training to fight with double sticks, because it definitely is not. They are helpful for beginners, however, in some ways; one use they do have is to make sure that muscular development in both arms remains relatively even.

If a practitioner wants to become a double stick fighter, or wants to be able to use either hand to fight, he should first master his strong hand, then let his strong hand teach his off-hand. You can, of course, train hard for many years and learn to use the off hand just as well as the strong hand. After both hands can execute techniques well, then try to integrate the two hands to work as a team. Unfortunately, apart from tournaments and

forms competition, the eskrimador may find that the practical applications are few and far between, and that his training time might have been better utilized, but that is for the individual to decide for himself.

3. That knife training (learning disarms, offensive and defensive techniques) can make the practitioner able to fight with a knife without suffering injury in a real encounter.

It is a fact that knife fighting results in getting cut, and anyone who claims that they can fight with knives and not get cut is not telling the truth, plain and simple. If you ever meet a teacher who claims to have had a lot of knife fights, ask to see his scars, because if he doesn't have any, then he also didn't have the fights. In fact, even a 10-year old is dangerous if he has a knife, because power is not needed to inflict damage. Even against a gun, if the gun is not drawn and ready, the knife is the more dangerous weapon at close range.

A few years ago, some police departments sponsored a test to see how armed officers would do against a surprise attack by a knife-wielding assailant, and the results were dramatic. It was found that the officers were unable to draw their weapons fast enough to save their lives from any distance inside about 20 feet. A well-known eskrimador participated in this exercise as the assailant, and in nearly any scenario, was able to "kill" the armed officers. "Well", you ask, "what's the point in training to defend against knives if you are going to get cut/killed anyway?" The reason is simple. With training, you may be able to redirect the cuts to non-fatal areas, while at the same time, preventing your opponent from further attacks. It's a question of surviving, not avoiding, getting cut.

There is another misconception about knife training, and it is the most important for survival in a real encounter. In many schools today, the training often focuses on tapping drills, and passing the opponent's blade back and forth from side to side, using the back of the hand and forearm to maintain contact with his arm. To put it bluntly, this is dangerous. While gaining a feel for where the opponent is at any one time is a plus, overall you are learning more bad habits than good ones.

First, because cuts cannot be avoided, it is wrong to practice giving your opponent additional chances to cut you. In a real encounter, you must judge the proper timing and distance and when the attack is made, deal with it. That means avoiding or redirecting the attack and making your own response immediately. Every time you successfully live through an attack but do nothing to your opponent is just giving him one more chance to kill you. Dealing successfully with a knife attack means either disabling your opponent, disarming him or getting away, and the first two require you to grab, strike and/or close with your opponent.

Second, because you do need to block, grab, strike or parry with your hands, using only the back of the hands is another error. While the reasons people give for using the back of the hand are valid to a point (fewer blood vessels, tendons and ligaments are better protected, etc.), they can't make up for the loss of sensitivity, and the resulting decrease in available responses to an attack. Using the back of the hands is effective for drills and training, but in a real life-threatening situation, you must be prepared to grab and parry with your hands, which means you must use your palms and fingers. Also, in a real fight, the resulting flood of adrenaline (the fight or flight response) gives the impression of slowing things down. Your focus becomes sharper and your increased

concentration allows you to accomplish things you can't normally do in training. Unfortunately, as we've already said, you will probably still get cut, but better your palm than your throat!

4. That stick, or long weapon, techniques cannot be executed at extremely close range.

The main reason for this misconception is that some styles teach a blade-based Art, and the particular slashing and drawing strikes necessary when using a blade are best done at long and middle range. Many modern stickfighters, particularly those training in Cebu styles, do not use the blade-based attacks. The older stick styles that imitated blade-type attacks with heavy sticks, often flattened to resemble blades, depended on powerful strikes, using the same striking motions as a blade. More recently, using a stick has often meant that attacks have changed to emphasize speed and accuracy more than raw power, and the means to execute these types of attacks are available at very close range. Using the wrist to snap, and the waist to develop axial torque has replaced the arm and shoulder extension as the source of power.

At very close range, nose-to-nose, a modern fighter can hit any target from low on the right side, across the entire upper body, to low on the left side- a full 360 degrees. Being able to do this requires constant practice to develop the wrist flexibility necessary, and as the range of motion increases, so does the strength of the snap. The learning process also includes training to generate a great deal of power with little or no room. The same basic principles that apply to the 1" and 3" punches apply to these strikes.

Accuracy is also extremely important to being able to fight effectively at close range. When all the power is focused in the tip of a stick on the snap, it is imperative that the tip hits its target. A snap to the temple that instead hits high up on the side of the head will not accomplish its intended purpose.

Another important area of training for close range stickfighting is to learn how to create space when you need to. This does not involve stepping out, or moving away, but instead works on recognizing that between two bodies, there is a great deal of available space depending on the angle of upper body lean and the movement of the hips, in and out, for each fighter. Because of the design of our bodies, when we are standing toe-to-toe, we can each lean away and create as much as 3 or 4 feet to execute techniques. If we add to that slight shift of the feet, we can see that space for the techniques is the least of our worries!

5. That eskrima is only a weapons art, not a complete fighting system.

Unfortunately, this is one of the strongest fallacies about eskrima, due to the fact that it arises from more than one reason.

The first reason is the most obvious one. When the Art was first brought to the West, it was taught almost solely as a seminar subject, and was promoted as an add-on to whatever system the student was already studying. This was done in order to get the word out to as many people as possible as quickly as possible, but in the rush, very few sophisticated empty hand techniques were put out because they didn't fit into the scenario that had been created. If you advertise that this is an add-on to the student's art, then you can't make it too complete, otherwise it might be too difficult to justify the teaching methods.

The second reason has to do with the Art itself, and the wide range of variations in the details practiced by individuals. In actuality, there is no specific empty hand system that accompanies eskrima. Since styles of eskrima vary so widely among practitioners, why should we expect that all have the same empty hand system? In this respect, the Filipino arts are like the Chinese. If we look at the terms eskrima and gong fu, then we begin to see some similarities. There are hundreds of styles within the gong fu umbrella, with a wide variety of weapons, empty hands and kicking styles. Most of these styles have a more specific name to call themselves than just gong fu. In eskrima, however, where there are at least as many styles of fighting as there are in China (maybe more, due to the nature of the geography of the Philippines, with over 7000 islands), we don't seem willing to recognize these differences.

Many eskrimadors practice a form of fighting called pangamut, which is basically Filipino boxing, with throwing and locking techniques added in. Others use fighting styles brought from other places and adapted to complement the eskrima stick techniques. These include judo and jujitsu, silat and Chinese-based Kuntao. There is the local grappling style, dumog, and many styles of kicking, with names like Sipa, Sikaran, Pananjakman, etc. Finally, there are eskrima practitioners who developed an empty hand system based almost completely on the motions of the stick and the knife, and these vary even more due to the differences among the practitioners in the way they use their sticks. The fact is, all are eskrima, but none are like any other.

If we add the first problem to the second, we can see things a little clearer, perhaps. The seminar styles of eskrima that were first taught in the West were actually aggregations of a variety of eskrima styles. Presas, Inosanto and, more recently Sulite, all taught systems which were drawn from many teachers and many styles. There's nothing wrong with this, but it does cause a problem for the Art. We need to stop thinking of eskrima as a single Art. It is not. Now that the Art is accepted as a legitimate system in the martial arts world, it is time to allow it to find its proper place. As happened to karate in the 50's and 60's, and gong fu in the 60's and 70's, eskrima needs to be recognized as a general term for a country's fighting style, and the various systems within that style should now be exposed.



The History of Eskrima

Over the years, there have been so many versions of the origin and history of eskrima that the average practitioner doesn't have any idea what is the truth and what is fiction. This article has been researched in the Philippines, on the islands of Cebu and Negros. Hopefully, we can clear up some of the unknowns concerning the Art, and provide a basic framework for future efforts in researching the Art.

The history of eskrima in Cebu begins with the cultural migrations that took place in the past. The Philippines has had several invasions of different peoples and cultures, and each pushed the previous people farther inland and onto less desirable land. The most relevant migrations to the discussion of eskrima were the arrival of the Sri Visayan people, the Majapahit Empire, and the Spanish colonization. Nearly

every book that has been written recently about eskrima has talked about these parts of history.

The Sri Visayan culture conquered most of SE Asia, extending from the Indian sub-continent into the Indonesian archipelago. They did not extend into the Philippine islands, at their cultural peak, although individuals did come when under pressure from later invading cultures. Their influences can still be seen today in the temples and other monuments they erected. These influences also extended to the writing systems. Before the Spanish arrived in the islands, the Filipino language was written in Sanskrit, a writing style common to India. They also spread their fighting styles all over the area. It has been suggested that the various SE Asian systems, like Silat, Bersilat, and the many forms of eskrima all evolved from the Indian systems of 1000 years ago. Even today, the word used in Negros for Qi or Ki is prana, a word with Indian origins. There are many similarities among these Arts, far more than exist with the northern Asian systems of China and Japan.

According to the book *Isla De Los Delitos*, written by Don Baltazar Gonzales in 1800, in Madrid, Spain, the Sri Visayans came to the Philippines because they were pushed out of the rest of SE Asia by the arrival of the Majapahit Empire, a Muslim culture. The Majapahit Empire emerged in the 14th century to defeat and overthrow the Sri Visayans. They conquered Malaysia and, except for the island of Bali, Indonesia. The Majapahit Empire never reached farther north than the island of Mindanao on the Philippine island group, but its presence did have an influence on more northern areas.

The Muslim religion did reach farther north in the Philippines, however. A Muslim missionary, an Arab named Sharif Makdum, had arrived on the island of Sulu in 1380, quite a while before Christian missionaries arrived. By the time of Magellan's arrival, only the central Visayans were still animists. All of Mindanao and most of Luzon and Leyte were Muslim-dominated regions. The Sri Visayans fled before the Majapahit to occupy the central part of the Philippines, what is known as the Visayan Islands today.

At that time, most weapons in the Philippines were fire-hardened sticks, spears and the rare metal blade. It has been suggested that the Art came to the Philippines with the Sri Visayan people, although there were a large number of peoples already there who were pushed back into the interiors and mountains by their arrival. These indigenous groups were already expert users of spears, bows and other more exotic weapons, such as the blowgun and the yo-yo, which was used by dropping it out of trees on animals, and could be drawn back up if the attack missed. The various peoples were expert in the use of these weapons, but it does not appear that they had any type of a systematized fighting system. The Sri Visayans changed that. They brought with them a warrior culture that was used to using metal blades, and that learned how to use them in a standardized manner. They would have also brought their blade designs, such as the kris.

There is the legend of the ten Datus of Borneo who came to the Philippines in front of the Majapahit advance. They all settled in different areas of the island group. Datu means prince in the Sri Visayan language, and Datu Mangal settled on Mactan Island, which is a small island off the coast of the larger island of Cebu. He is credited with bringing the art of stickfighting to Mactan Island. Lapu Lapu was his son, and was the Datu of Mactan Island when Magellan arrived. Sri Bataugong and his son Sri Bantug Lumay are the ones who brought the art to the island of Cebu, and Sri Humabon was the son of Bantug Lumay. Other groups were the tribes of Datu Puti, and his wife

Pinangpang, and Datu Sumakwei, with his wife Painangan (a.k.a. Aloyon), who settled on the island of Panay. Datu Balensuela and his wife Dumangsil settled the farthest north, in Taal, Batangas, and the Batangas style of eskrima still today more closely resembles the Cebu style than the other Luzon styles. The remaining Datus and their wives were Bankaya (wife- Katurong), Paiburong (Pabulanan), Padohinog (Ribongsapaw), Dumangsol (Kabiling), and Dumalogdog (Lubay, but she was not his wife). They settled in various places around the Visayan Islands, including Limasawa on Camiguin Island. It should be noted that many of the names seem Spanish in origin, and many experts now discount the legend altogether, but it makes a good story.

It must be remembered that a quality blade was probably the most valuable thing a person could own in those days, and only the very rich or members of the upper classes could afford them. Also, since the Art was almost certainly brought by the conquering Sri Visayans, they would not have willingly taught the conquered local people. Even 150 years after the Sri Visayans came to the islands, it was probably true that most of the expert practitioners were members of the upper classes, the conquerors. It is unlikely that the average farmer or commoner at that time had been taught, or even had the time to try to learn on his own. The idea that every warrior in the Philippines was walking around with his kris or kampilan is completely in error. While this has changed over the last 200 years, especially in Mindanao, it was not so at that time. The arrival of the Spanish brought a large increase in the number and availability of bladed weapons to the Philippines, and the Filipinos were quick to take advantage of this, but most fighters were still using sticks until that time. The most likely scenario is that a Datu and his nobles would have carried blades, and the rest of his war band would have been armed with the sticks and spears documented by Pigafetta. This same scenario was true in Europe during the time when bladed weapons dominated fighting. The actual number of mounted, heavily armored knights was actually very small. The majority of armed men were made up of spearmen or bowmen.

Sri Humabon was the Datu of Sugbu (Cebu) when Magellan arrived in 1521, and was already involved in a dispute with Datu Lapu Lapu at that time, over land supposedly stolen from Lapu Lapu's father in the area of the sea channel between the two islands. Because of this dispute, Lapu Lapu was already training and drilling his men for war with Humabon. At first, Humabon was quite happy to deal with Magellan, because Lapu Lapu was very famous for his strength and fighting ability, and Humabon hoped to be able to use Magellan and his cannon to his advantage. One legend about Lapu Lapu's strength was that he could throw a pestle-sized stick through the trunk of a medium-sized coconut tree.

When Magellan arrived in Cebu, he had his ships fire a cannonade to impress the locals. Humabon, upon meeting Magellan, asked what was the meaning of the cannonade, and what did the strangers want? He told Magellan that if they came for friendship and trade they were welcome, but they also had to pay him tribute as the ruler of Cebu. Magellan refused by declaring that they could not pay tribute to any ruler less than the Emperor Charles, and that if the Cebuanos insisted, they would have to fight. Humabon decided to be friendly and offered an exchange of gifts. Rajah Awi of Limasawa went to Magellan's ship to prepare the way for Humabon's nephew, who was bringing the gifts from Humabon.

Humabon's nephew and a large delegation arrived on board and Magellan immediately launched into a long speech about Christianity. He spoke of God, redemption and of baptism. After his speech, he asked if the Cebuanos wanted to be baptized and they all agreed! At this, Magellan is said to have wept and promised perpetual peace. The exchange of gifts followed, with the Cebu delegation-giving swine, goats, fowl and rice. The Spanish gave white linen cloth, a rich robe of yellow and purple silk made in the Turkish style, a red bonnet and a rosary.

When the delegation returned to Humabon, Pigafetta (the chronicler of Magellan's travels) and a delegation of Spaniards accompanied them, and he described Humabon as "...short, fat and tattooed. He was naked except for a loincloth and an embroidered cloth around his head. Gold earrings hung from his ears, and there was a gold chain about his neck."

After allowing the Spanish to dress him in the red robe and bonnet, Humabon provided some entertainment. This consisted of young girls singing and dancing, while food and drinks were served. Unfortunately, the Spaniards ruined the opportunity by getting drunk and, in the course of the drunken party, attacked and raped some of the 50 dancers, who happened to be virgins. The encounter ended with the Cebuanos chasing the Spanish back to their boats. It was after this event that Magellan attempted to get Lapu Lapu to come to Cebu.

Lapu Lapu's fight with Magellan occurred because Magellan had landed on Cebu Island and was dealing with Humabon. Magellan sent word that he wanted Lapu Lapu to come to Humabon's place to meet with him, and Lapu Lapu refused. It is unknown whether he refused because he did not want to talk to Magellan, whether he felt that a summons was beneath him, or that he just did not want to go to the place of his enemy, Humabon. In any case, Magellan took his men to bring him by force on April 27, 1521. Actually, the fight was extremely one-sided. Most of the soldiers did not make the trip to fight Lapu-Lapu, because they did not want to row the boats all the way across the channel. The force was made up mainly of religious types, cabin boys and cooks, and Magellan's syncophants. They were outnumbered at least 10-to-1, never even made it fully onto the beach, and Magellan was killed.

After this disastrous battle, the remaining members of Magellan's expedition returned to Cebu, where Humabon invited them ashore for a feast. Pigafetta was taken ill at that time, and so remained on board with the men left to tend the ships. Because of his illness, he survived to return to Spain, because Humabon and his men fell on the feasters and killed them. The survivors on the ships quickly weighed anchor and left for Spain.

Miguel Lopez de Legaspi arrived in Cebu in 1565 with 400 men, but met with firm resistance from the local ruler, named Tupas, who was the son of Humabon. Tupas had been 5 years old when Magellan came to Cebu. De Legaspi stayed in Cebu for 3 years, but since the local economy was subsistence-based, meaning the people just picked fruit and caught fish each day for their food, there was nowhere near enough extra for 400 Spaniards. The Spaniards were forced to constantly travel to other islands to trade for, gather or steal food. What finally forced the Spanish to leave Cebu was the arrival of a large force of Portuguese from Malacca. Since the Philippines was in the Portuguese half of the world, as decided by the Pope, they did not take kindly to the Spanish trying to settle there.

The Portuguese had made frequent trips to the Visayan Islands in the preceding years, and the people were terrified of them. Just a couple years before, the Portuguese had sacked the island of Bohol, to the south of Cebu, taking more than 1000 men, women and children as slaves. Because of this fear, the Spanish were able to gain a small measure of trust from the Filipinos by guaranteeing that they were not involved in the slave trade.

Legaspi left and went to what would become Manila in 1568 and found it under Muslim control, ruled by Rajah Sulayman and others. Legaspi eventually established the first Spanish settlement in Leyte, and began spreading Christianity. At that time, the Spanish were already very impressed with the local styles of fighting. They knew how Magellan had died, through the chronicles of Pigafetta. De Legaspi told of having witnessed an exhibition in Abuyog on the island of Leyte by the local chief, named Malitik, and his son, Kamutunan, in the local fighting arts.

In the beginning, the Spanish made good use of the locals fighting abilities. Each conquered tribe or island group was then used to provide soldiers to attack the next. In the end, the Spanish controlled nearly all of the central and northern Philippines, and only a relatively small number of troops had been needed to do it. The Spanish, despite repeated attempts over several hundred years, never conquered the Muslim tribes located on the southern island of Mindanao. One history states that the Spanish made 38 separate attempts to conquer parts of the south, and never won even an inch of soil!

The arrival of the Spanish also brought their styles of fighting, notably the espada y daga fencing style, which the natives quickly adapted to their own styles. From the late 1500s into the 1700s, blade fighting developed steadily along fencing lines, heavily influenced by the Spanish style of fighting. The Art as practiced in the Muslim south was not influenced so much by the Spanish, and today shows a much greater resemblance to forms of Indonesian silat.

The Spanish style kept the dagger back near the hip and, in fact, San Miguel eskrima, the espada y daga style of Filemon "Momoy" Canete (of Doce Pares) has maintained this method to this day. By the 1700s, the Spanish were worrying more and more of the possibilities of revolt. As a result, the display, the use or the carrying of blades by the local people was prohibited. This ban has been mentioned as forcing the natives to return to using sticks, like kamagong, or a species of palm called bahi for their fighting weapons, and rattan for their training weapons. These hardwoods are very dense, and a stick made out of them will resemble a blade in its weight and handling characteristics. These weapons were usually flattened and shaped to imitate a blade, and the actual fighting styles remained the same as when using the blades. Actually, the ban would have had little effect anywhere except the big cities. Even today, the people out in the provinces do pretty much whatever they want. This is another of the legends that is simply not true.

Blade styles of fighting were also maintained, to some degree, due to performing the moro-moro (a Spanish morality play based on the expulsion of the Moors from Spain), which was introduced by Spanish priests in 1637, or the native stage plays and dances, called sayaws. A type of broadsword called a kalis was the weapon normally used in these plays, and is still popular among the Filipino Muslims today. Later, even this blade was banned from the moro-moro and the sayaw. The name "kali" has recently become synonymous with eskrima in the United States, and may be derived from the

name of this blade, though the term has not been used in the Philippines until very recently.

Another term, arnis, may have come from the Spanish word arnes, meaning defensive armor or trappings, which were worn by the performers in the moro-moro plays. While the word may actually originate here, the use of the term arnis to describe the Art is relatively recent, just since the 1960s. It can be attributed mostly to the Presas family and their Modern Arnis organization. A Presidential Decree stated that the Philippine school system should adopt the Art, and this name for it, as part of the physical education curriculum. Unfortunately, the Decree was never implemented on a national basis.

The Art has been called many other things in the past: estokada, estoque, fraile or armas de mano. Even today, it has many names: the Tagalog people call it pananandata, the Pangasinan people- kalirongan, the Ilocanos- didya or Kabarosan, the Ibanag - pagkalikali, the Pampaguenos - sinawali, and the Visayans- kaliradman or pagaradman and later, esgrima or eskrima. Eskrima is either derived from the Spanish word esgrima, which means a game between two combatants with the use of blunt instruments, or the word escrima, which means fencing. The name of the stick is also different wherever you go, with names like garote, baston, muton or olisi. The word olisi is actually just the name of a particular species of rattan, which has short sections and is hard and of good quality for fighting.

The Philippine people have never really thought of eskrima as a system of fighting. Rather it was a personal or family skill, passed down for use when necessary. It is only recently, with the increased interest by westerners that the Art has come to be recognized for what it is. In the past, there were no styles or systems as we think of them today. A father or uncle would pass on what he knew to sons or nephews, and then the students would refine the knowledge to suit their own body-type, personality and necessity of use. A particular method of fighting might only last one or two generations before it was adapted into something completely different. Since most types of eskrima have no forms or any codified methods or techniques, it has constantly changed to fit the needs of its practitioners. It has never tried to make the practitioners fit the Art, as is required in most other styles of the martial arts. Because of this, it has been able to maintain its effectiveness up to this time.

One of the things that makes the Art of eskrima unique is the personality of its practitioners, at least of those up to the modern era. The eskrimador was likely to be a tough guy, who liked to drink, gamble and entertain his vices. He was usually uneducated, or lacking in higher education, although probably intelligent (because great fighters cannot be stupid!), but he had no chance, or lacked the means to gain an education. It is very true that intense interest in something outside of school interferes with schooling. The need to practice long hours, along with the need to feed oneself and one's family, resulted in schooling generally being neglected.

Aggressive personalities are generally risk takers, and if you take a lot of risks, sooner or later you will suffer, either economically or physically. The Art generally appealed to these types of people, and when you have no education or marketable skills, when you have a risk-taker type of personality and you also have skills in fighting, then chances are that you will gravitate towards the wrong side of the tracks. Many of the

more famous eskrimadors became well-known enforcers in local political warlords private armies, or became underworld figures themselves.

The general philosophy of eskrima has also been affected by these facts. If we compare eskrima with the Chinese or Japanese arts, we see a big difference. The northern Asian arts were generally reserved for the rich and powerful, the nobility, monks or the well educated. In China, a father might have hired a tutor to teach his son the arts, at the same time as having other tutors for painting, poetry, political training, Zen or other religious dogma, etc. In Japan, most likely the student was a samurai. The end result was that Chinese and Japanese arts, excepting perhaps the Okinawan, generally have more of an upper class image. This is not true of the Filipino arts. The attitude in the past has been one of the macho, swaggering gunfighter, with constant challenges given to anyone who was confident enough to claim himself an expert, with some of these encounters ending in the death of one or both of the combatants. Anyone who claimed to be an expert in eskrima had to be prepared to defend his claim at any time. One of the reasons the Art is in danger today is because this is no longer true. It seems anyone can claim to be a master and get away with it. Also, the Philippines was not affected by the pacifist ideas of Buddhism. Instead, the Spanish form of Christianity (one of the more brutal creeds on earth) and the Muslim religion, which glorifies death in battle with the infidel, were the major influences on what was already an aggressive and war-like culture.

History of Eskrima in Cebu

Before the 20th century, not much is known about specific styles of stickfighting. There were some famous fighters, and some of their exploits are legendary, but in the main, most eskrimadors were not known outside their own villages.

Eskrimadors took a big part in the revolt against the Spanish in 1896. Even those who did not fight were influenced by the Art. The greatest Filipino martyr, Dr. Jose P. Rizal, was said to have studied eskrima in his youth before he left for

Europe. The first weapon used by revolt leaders like Andres Bonifacio was the itak (Sundang in Cebuano), or bolo. Revolutionary generals like Gregorio del Pilar and Antonio Luna were known practitioners of the Art. An important aspect of many



eskrimadors, which made them men other men wanted to follow, was the anting-anting. These were various charms and amulets which were said to protect the practitioner from harm. There are many stories of great deeds done by these men, which would have killed ordinary men. The stories of the anting-anting could fill an entire book by themselves.

After freedom from the Spanish was achieved in 1898, the Filipinos had the misfortune to be taken over by the US, who they thought had only been helping them in their struggle for independence. When the fighting ended, people got on with their lives, and the eskrimadors began to look at things more than just as something passed down from father to son. In Cebu, they formed the Labangon Fencing Association on August 14, 1910. The members of the group all practiced their individual styles of eskrima, but they recognized that they could benefit from coming together. The Labangon Club was formed because there had always been some idea to unify eskrimadors into a single group, but this group was in constant conflict. They even called themselves “iro ug iring” (dog and cat), because as one practitioner was demonstrating his style, all the others would be making fun and criticizing him. When he finished, someone else would begin and suffer the same treatment.

The club was officially closed by a vote in a board meeting, according to Eulogio Canete (now deceased), who was secretary of the Labangon Club at that time. It was closed because the Mayor of Cebu had given a donation of 500 pesos to the president of the Club (a lot of money, at a time when a full day’s food could be had for a few centavos), and the members of the Club were asking where the money was. The President didn’t want to discuss it and the vote to disband was held. The Association officially ended on August 14, 1920.

A few years after the Labangon Association ended, the Doce Pares Club was formed. The name was taken from that of a group of famous fighting men in France who were all expert swordsmen, during the reign of Charlemagne. It was to have begun in December 1931, but they lacked the desired number of people to start, so it began on January 11, 1932. Most of the same people who had been in the Labangon Association were also in the new club.

Three famous eskrimadors around at that time, Teodoro “Doring” Saavedra, Estanilao “Islaw” Romo and a man named Alicante held a famous match in 1933. This officially sanctioned match was held to determine the local champion. By officially sanctioned, it means that the Mayor and other local officials were involved and the fighters had signed injury waivers. “Islaw” Romo was to have fought Alicante, but at the last minute backed out, saying he hadn’t discussed it with his wife. Since Alicante began bragging and saying how the others were afraid to fight him, “Doring” Saavedra stepped up and fought. Alicante won the first round, but Saavedra won the second and the third to take the match, and was recognized as the best eskrimador in the area.

The new club, Doce Pares, was formed to unite under one forceful leadership all the well-known Cebu eskrimadors, and once united, to work together to give new life and strength to the Art. Another reason for forming the club was to do research into other styles of eskrima. The members pooled their knowledge and ability and took pains in researching and studying the various styles of other groups, such as the Tagalog, the Pampango, the Ilocano and the Tausog.

The most common style at that time was a long-range style, because it was blade-oriented, and was commonly used with espada y daga, although the system of the

Saavedras was perhaps the favorite style of the time, because of the skill of its number one practitioner.

In a great many versions of the history of eskrima, the name Dizon is often mentioned. He was supposed to have been a close friend and/or teacher of Angel Cabales and Floro Villabrille. He was also supposed to have been a member of Doce Pares in 1932, and the story of his passing through some kind of Indiana Jones-type cave to prove his mastery of the art is well known. As can be seen from Doce Pare's own records, Dizon was not a member (*There was another club in the northern part of the country, which also called itself Doce Pares. It is possible that the stories concerning Dizon may have involved this other club. This club was supposed to have been in the area of Mt. Banahaw.*), and no one in Doce Pares ever went through any ritual like that described. It was just a group of men with a common love, who got together to work out and exchange ideas. There was never anything secret about it.



Venancio "Anciong" Bacon

Even though the Doce Pares Club was set up to bring all eskrimadors under one organization, personalities and politics soon broke things up. One of the first to break away was the group of Venancio "Anciong" Bacon, who was a student of Lorenzo Saavedra. He split from Doce Pares to create his own group and named it Balintawak, after the name of the street where their club was located. He split away because of some problems over money, but also for other reasons. One was because of the political fighting within the club, where one group was trying to ease out the others and take control. Another was that he didn't like the atmosphere in the club where people

criticized and made fun of each other's play. His Balintawak club became the largest and most successful of the other clubs in Cebu, and nearly caused Doce Pares to fold in the 50's, due to their feud. Balintawak later also split into several branches, led by Teofilo Velez, Atty. Villasin and "Boring" Heyrosa among others. "Boring" Heyrosa, who passed away a few years ago, was one of the last students of Bacon, and a very skillful fighter. He was known to willingly accept challenge matches right up to the time of his death, and he didn't lose!

Delfin Lopez was a local tough guy and a Balintawak member. He had been the head of the secret service of the Cebu police department. When he left the police force, he became the head of the Cuanco clan's private army. He was a top fighter, perhaps the most feared, in the system. He was finally assassinated by a knife-wielding killer who jumped down on him from above and behind, because he was involved in breaking a strike and there was no one willing to face him directly.

Another group to break away from Doce Pares was the Lapunti group, headed by Filemon Caburnay, a former student of Filemon “Momoy” Canete. When Bruce Lee’s movie Enter the Dragon came out, the local film community decided to do a spoof called Enter Garote, with a comedian named Ciquito, and they wanted some eskrima experts to be in it. They went to the Doce Pares club, and since money was involved, the Doce Pares people who were approached wanted to keep the number of participants low, so each would get more money. Filemon Caburnay was told not to go, but he had already been invited by someone else involved with the movie, and he showed up. When he arrived, the other Doce Pares people were not happy to see him and the resulting bad feelings caused him to pull out of the club and form Lapunti. The name Lapunti is drawn from the names of the three barangays where the club operated- the Excalibur/Durex group, headed by Larry



Grandmaster Felimon Canete



Dionisio Canete

www.doceparesinternational.com

Alquezar also withdrew from Doce Pares. Durex was originally started by Dionisio “Diony” Canete, the Candawan brothers and a couple others as a college student's Doce Pares, much like a fraternity. Eventually, the students graduated or quit, and the club faded into nothing. Alquezar was a student of Felix Candawan, who had also been a student of Momoy Canete. Because Alquezar had never really trained with one of the head people in the Doce Pares club, he was never really accepted as a full member. Also, he was very skillful and liked to show off his skills, doing demonstrations, etc. He was always kept at arms length until the first national Eskrima Masters competition, when the Doce Pares people wanted their own fighters to win. They knew that Alquezar would be a formidable opponent, so they approached him and asked him to be head referee of the competition, thus eliminating him from competition. He was also made president of the Cebu Eskrima Association, which only lasted until the competition was over, and then faded away. Alquezar then withdrew from Doce Pares and resurrected the Durex name for his club. The Doce Pares group later came to regret these splits, because the one with Balintawak in particular nearly forced the club to fold.

Although Cebu is known as the cradle of eskrima in the Philippines, there are some connections with the eskrima on other islands, particularly the island of Negros, to the northwest of Cebu. Vicente “Inting” Carin, one of the most famous Cebu fighters in the post- W.W.II era, had several teachers. One, named Poncing Ybanez, was from Cebu, but because of a family problem, was forced to go to Negros for many years. When he finally returned, he knew a different style of eskrima, which proved to be very effective.



Vicente “Inting” Carin

One famous eskrimador named “Tatay” Isko, who was a member of the Pulahan Rebellion against the Spanish at the end of the last century, moved from Panay to Negros and is rumored to have taught several of the better known

Negros fighters. There is other evidence of this connection in the terms used to describe some techniques. For example, some terms used in the daga y daga style of Momoy Canete from Cebu are actually Ilongo terms from Negros.

After WW II, there was a style shift away from the longer range, blade styles to the closer range, stick styles in Cebu. With a blade, targets tended to be the arm and hand of the opponent, because with a blade you don't want to get too close to open yourself to a cut. With stick fights, however, the whole body can be targeted, because better defense is possible, since the stick can be grabbed, parried and moved by the live hand to a much greater degree than can the blade.

There was also a revival of interest in the arts that grew along with the entrance of Japanese judo and karate in the 1950s, and later with Tae Kwon Do. Ciriaco "Cacoy" Canete, of Doce Pares, combined the arts of eskrima and judo. The result was called Escrido, and it still exists today. Another important



Ciriaco "Cacoy" Canete
www.docepare.com

reason for the revival of the Art was when Philippine nationalism grew in the early 1960s. Initiated by a group called Samahan sa Arnis ng Filipinas (Association of Arnis Practitioners), former secretary of education Alejandro Roces praised the revival in a speech at the meeting launching the movement. In his speech, he described arnis as: a neglected aspect of our cultural history as a people... arnis is as old as the Philippines. It is germane to the Filipino, his culture and temperament. During pre-historic times, it was indulged in as a form of recreation. Filipinos learned it together with reading, writing, religion, cantation and Sanskrit. It was not, at the time, purely fencing, as we now regard that term. It had its variations in the form of dance and combative art known as sayaw or sinulog, which was both artistic and entertaining.

After martial law was declared in the Philippines in the early 70s, NARAPHIL came into being, headed by General Fabian Ver, chief of President Marcos Presidential Security Command. It was given the sole responsibility to preserve, popularize and propagate the Art, not only throughout the Philippines, but also in other countries around the world. In 1976, arnis was supposed to be put into the school system as a required subject in physical education, by Presidential decree, but never actually made it.

By the middle 1970s, when Remy Presas, Leo Gaje and others arrived in the U.S. and began spreading the Art, eskrima or arnis had already been in America for many years. In the 20th century, after the Philippines became part of the American sphere of influence, many Filipino people came to the US, mainly in Hawaii and California. Among these people are many names already well known to the US eskrima community.

Names like Villabrille, Cabales, Lacoste, Emperado and many others too numerous to mention are famous today. There were large communities of mainly farm laborers, and among these people were many eskrimadors, although they rarely taught anyone but Filipinos. Some people, though, like Angel Cabales in California and Baltazar Sayoc in New York City had opened schools in the 60's and accepted western students, but the Art mainly remained among Filipinos.

The opening of the Art to Westerners was done mainly through the seminar and the summer camp method. The stick techniques of eskrima were often taught as add-ons to other arts, with the idea that it was the quickest way to make the Art known. It worked, to a fashion, but created additional problems by giving people the wrong impression about eskrima. It has often been misunderstood as being only a weapons art, with little or no empty hand component. This is not true, of course, but this mistaken idea still continues today.

Another area that has worked to the detriment of the Art in the modern era has been the tournament system that has grown up around it. Since only the stickfighting aspects of the Art are used in tournaments, they have helped propagate the misperception about the Arts empty hand component.

The Art in Present day -

Eskrima still has a strong base in the Philippines, but is at a critical time. The last generation of the old men who learned the Art in the traditional way, and who had the opportunities to actually use it are passing. The growth of the tournament styles, and the lack of competent instructors who have actually completed their own training means that each succeeding generation of stickfighters will be less and less capable of real combat. Also, as a culture reaches a certain economic level, interest in things like the martial arts naturally fades, to be replaced by video games, computers and making money. This happened in Japan, Taiwan, Korea and other places, so we shouldn't expect it not to happen in the Philippines. We can just try to preserve as much as possible and hope for the best. There are many groups that are trying to maintain the Art, or even help it expand.



President Ferdinand Marcos
General Fabian Ver

Arnis Philippines is a group that was formed when President Ferdinand Marcos fell from power. General Ver left the country with Marcos and NARAPHIL fell along with the government. Arnis Philippines is still the nation's Olympic connection.

Unfortunately, eskrima lost an excellent chance to get international exposure because of political infighting. In the early 1990s, the Philippines hosted the SE Asian Games. The host country has the right to decide on demonstration sports that are not regular events, and the Philippines selected arnis. The problems began when other nations began asking for trainers, coaches and advisors to help them learn enough to be able to participate in the event. Because of the money involved (training fees, travel allowances, per diem, honorariums, etc.), the people within Arnis Philippines could not agree on who went where and who was responsible for which countries, so the end result was that only three other nations were able to field teams for the demonstration event, and everyone in the Art looked bad. Because of that fiasco, there never was any real chance to get eskrima into the Olympics as a demonstration sport. Arnis Philippines still exists, but is not given much respect. There are still many excellent eskrimadors around the country, but many

want nothing to do with the various national groups, because they can't accept the political maneuvering.

Christy Jalasco, the daughter of former President Fidel Ramos, has spearheaded another national organization, TEKAC - Traditional Eskrima-Kali-Arnis Confederation. It was created because, as former Pres. Ramos stated: "I don't want to learn our native arts from foreigners." Unfortunately, many of the same carpetbaggers who messed up NARAPHIL and Arnis Philippines have been trying the same thing with TEKAC. Any time an organization has friends in high places, the group must be taken seriously, but so far it has not really gotten off the ground.

The most famous eskrima club, Doce Pares, is still around, but as the old members pass, and the original members give way to younger people, the group has changed. It has become, for the most part, a tournament-oriented style. The skill levels of the modern members have rarely reached that of the original group. This is due to many reasons, including increased educational opportunities for the young, with the resulting decrease in training time put in, the western influence where a low level of skill can still make money teaching unskilled foreigners, and the dilution of the Art itself by training for tournaments and seminars instead of real fighting.



www.wekafusa.com

WEKAF, the World Eskrima Kali Arnis Federation, was created by "Diony" Canete of Doce Pares, and is the organization perhaps best placed to make a difference. It promotes tournaments, sells gear and maintains a visible presence around the world. Unfortunately, the thirst for ever increasing amounts of money has grown so large, with the resulting problems that brings, that most objective observers don't think the organization will be the answer.

Where will the Filipino arts be in the future? Hopefully, eskrima will be able to overcome its problems, will continue to grow and will eventually reach a position of stability within the martial arts community. Only time will tell.

Original Doce Pares Group:

According to Fortunato Penalosa, who was the club secretary from 1932-1941, there were 12 original members, followed later by twelve more to make a total of 24 (12 pairs, or doce pares). They are as follows:

President: Eulogio D. "Ingko Yoling" Canete

Vice President: Teodorico "Doring" Saavedra

Secretary: Fortunato Penalosa

Treasurer: Marcelo Verano

Auditor: Deogracias Nadela

Historian: Pio Deiparine

Sergeants-at-arms: Filemon "Momoy" Canete, Rodolfo Quijano

Directors: Florentino Canete, Federico Saavedra, Strong Tupas, Juanito Lauron, and Magdaleno Cabasan

Members: Lorenzo Saavedra, Amancio Saavedra, Maximo Canete, Silvestre Canete, Tirso Canete, Rufino Canete, Andres Canete, Ciriaco "Cacoy" Canete

Advisors: Atty. Cecilio De La Victorio, Atty. Margarito Reviles, and Dr. Anastacio Deiparine

Note: Out of the original 24 members, only Ciriaco "Cacoy" Canete is still with us. It must be remembered that there were 12 original members, and the other 12 were added later. Since "Cacoy" Canete was only 13 years old when Doce Pares was formed in 1932, he was almost certainly one of the ones added later.

Evolution and Re-invention

A key word in the development of a martial system is evolution. For many systems, we have only legends as to the beginnings of the system. We can't pin down the actual dates or places or in some cases, even who the original practitioners were. For other systems, we have a complete lineage. For all systems, though, the term evolution has meaning. No system in existence today was created exactly as is and then maintained down through the years. Not one. The reality is that something was created and then added to over the years by the following generations.

When a style of fighting becomes standardized, like most kung fu or karate styles, it is learned on the basis of that standardization, i.e. the forms, the one-step or three-step sparring, and so on. One only progresses through the system if one learns the standards. It is true, of course, that people at the high end, after mastering all the forms and other material, have added innovations, but these were added to the existing structure; therefore the term evolution.

This evolution has not been only in the physical side of these systems, but in the philosophical side as well. One theory of the creation of Tai Ji Quan (tai chi chuan) was that a collection of all the deadliest strikes was assembled, and then the form was built around them to conceal them from the average person. Shotokan was used on prisoners-of-war during WW II to test the actual damage to the body by the various strikes. All of the various - Jutsu arts originated on the battlefield. What at one time were warrior arts training people to kill have evolved into arts, which stress peace, physical fitness and defensive techniques. It can safely be said that the creators of most of the systems around today would not recognize a great deal of what is taught.

What about eskrima? Has it evolved along these same lines? In the past, eskrima was an art, which did not evolve, but rather was re-invented by each succeeding generation of fighters. Until recently, there were no stances, no forms, and no standardized routines at all. In the past, eskrima was always taught one-to-one, or to a very small group with a great deal of individual instruction. There was almost never a style or a name to the method. It was just something a father taught his son. Each generation just learned some effective techniques from the preceding generation and then went on to modify, adjust, adapt what they had learned to their own body type, personality, fighting spirit, etc. In fact, most of the great eskrimadors of the past learned only a very basic fighting framework from their teachers.

Eskrima in the past did not include all the drills and exercises which seem to make up the bulk of the training today. The learning of all these drills, exercises and techniques doesn't make the student a fighter. The majority of the old masters' fighting skill was developed after class, when they left the "classroom" and went out in the street

to practice. They fought with each other, or with other students in the area, they fought with travelers, they fought with anyone who was willing. The most motivated ones, the ones who had discovered that they had a talent for the Art, went around looking for people to fight. If these experts then began to teach their hard-earned skills to others, what could they teach? Most of what made them great was the fighting experience, not the drills they might have seen. Within one or two generations, the style their students ended up with no longer resembled that of the great fighter, but was whatever the current practitioners had developed, thus the term re-invention instead of evolution.

Eskrima is an Art that is still used in the old way. There exist people outside the cities in the Philippines who still train in the old ways and have maintained the old skills. Unfortunately, these people are passing and not so many are stepping up to take their places, and now the term evolution has raised its ugly head in regards to eskrima. Since eskrima has become known in the West, people have been changing it to make it suitable for mass-based training. It is now evolving, with standardized drills and exercises constantly being added. This evolution has now made eskrima an art like kung fu or karate, one potentially on the decline.

In our modern world, with our legal system being what it is, we cannot travel around the country challenging other eskrimadors, as much as we might like to. Since we can't gain true fighting skill that way, the only other way is serious sparring with someone who is much better than you over a long period of time. Serious sparring means there will be pain, because the only way to learn how to avoid being hit is to be hit regularly until you learn how to stop it. It is easy to hit someone else. The skill in eskrima is in hitting your opponent while avoiding being hit in return. The only way to truly develop this skill is to play with no padding at all, and trust the senior to have control of his weapon so the damage is limited. This method had an extra benefit in the past, because it quickly exposed those individuals who did not have the heart for serious fighting. As any experienced fighter (from any style or system) will tell you, it is not what you know (the techniques of fighting) which wins the fight, but how much heart or guts you have, how much pain can you stand.

In today's eskrima, sadly, it seems like the teacher who knows the most drills, and who can perform them in the smoothest manner is considered the most accomplished. Real fighting is not pretty, and the people who are capable of it aren't always so slick in their presentation of the Art. The first thing a fighter needs is not skill in fighting or fancy techniques or even a strong body. The first thing a fighter needs is the willingness to fight, the attitude. Being able to do drills doesn't have anything to do with real fighting. This is the greatest difference in eskrimadors today. The attitude is no longer a prerequisite for learning the Art. Since training no longer forces the weak or shy ones out, we now actually have people who have never been in a real fight teaching others how to fight!

There has been almost an exponential growth in drills and exercises within the Art in the recent past. In the past, the learning of techniques took very little time, and a long time was spent in actually mastering those techniques for fighting. Eskrima was mostly practice sparring. Today, however, if a school wants to maintain student numbers, there must be a curriculum to teach, therefore the drills and exercises. In the past, sparring and actual fighting taught the Art, but today, training in drills and exercises has taken that position.

It is important to remember that there is training, and then there is fighting. Fighting means knocking out, maiming or killing your opponent, with no concern for pulling the blow, tapping out, or “good sportsmanship”. Training means developing the body to be able to fight, developing endurance, honing reflexes, learning techniques and then practicing what has been learned. There is very little common ground between the two. Even in boxing, a fighter who only did roadwork, skipped rope, hit the heavy bag and shadowboxed would stand very little chance in the ring with an opponent who did no training but who had had twenty or thirty fights already.

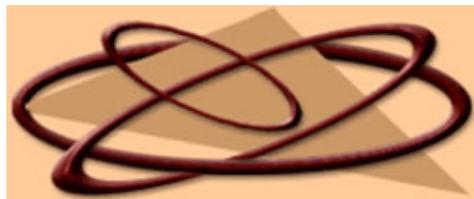
Today, the old type of training rarely happens. Instead, people train for tournaments, wearing lots of padding. These can be very interesting and fun, but they have little or nothing to do with real eskrima. Here the fighters try to hit each other, but because of the armor they wear, they ignore being hit! There is no defense at all. While it may be considered a sport, it certainly isn't eskrima. At the other end of the spectrum, we also have people training to fight each other full contact, but then defeating the purpose by wearing padding on their heads, elbows and hands, the main targets in eskrima. They are trying to simulate real fighting as best they can, but when you can't hurt your opponent with a strike (through the padding), then the obvious result is that you end up in a clinch and start grappling. Again, not really eskrima, because the Philippines is a blade-oriented culture. Even small children are skilled in using blades for all kinds of purposes. When everyone carries a blade, grappling just is not an option.



Eskrima was, and still is for a few practitioners, one of the most effective martial systems. This was due mainly to the lack of an evolved structure. Each player developed the Art to its highest level for him. The Art maintained a consistently high level of skill over the generations because people were still using it to fight. Survival meant your art needed to be the best it could be. Today, this constant re-invention has been replaced by evolution, where standardization is steadily replacing innovation and inspiration. Eskrima is going (has gone) the way of most other martial systems, and if the practitioners don't recognize what is happening, very soon there won't be any real eskrima left. All that will remain will be the sport, and that will be a great loss.

(Published in Black Belt Magazine, May '03)
History of Eskrima, Pre-1900
History of Eskrima in Cebu, Post-1900
Eskrima: Evolution and Re-invention

(Published in Black Belt Magazine, October '99)
Eskrima- A Misunderstood Art!



KBS System: Filipino Martial Arts
www.kbs-system.com

When I began writing some of the various articles, which are presented here in FMA Digest this issue, I was one of the few Western practitioners of Eskrima who had actual experience in the Philippines. Of course, quite a few people had made training trips, or short training vacations, but I was actually living there. When I first joined Ray Terry's Eskrima Digest in the mid-90s, for example, there were very few other people on the list who had the resources at hand that I did. Because of this, I was a frequent poster, and started writing articles for the media to try to dispel the large amount of misinformation that had nearly become accepted as fact in the Filipino martial arts.

Today, there are any number of knowledgeable Filipino martial artists on the various lists and writing for the media, and there is no longer any need for a Westerner to try to present information about Filipino history or martial arts to people wanting to learn. As a result, my writing is mostly limited to rants and rambles on my website (www.kbs-system.com).

I have tried to update these articles to correct any glaring mistakes (of which there were several!). I hope that readers of the FMA Digest who may have read them years ago when they were first published will enjoy them again, and that any younger readers will enjoy them for the first time.

Steven Drape

The Author: Guro Steven Drape is the Chief Instructor of the KBS System. He has spent nearly 30 years in the martial arts, and is presently living in Abu Dhabi in the UAE. He has a MA degree in Applied Linguistics and is an English professor by trade. He currently teaches at the ADNOC Technical Institute in Abu Dhabi. Apart from the time spent in the Middle East (5 years), Guro Drape has lived most of the past 20 years in the Far East- splitting time between Taiwan and the Philippines (training in Kuntao and Eskrima).

Arnis: A Question of Origins

By Bot Jocano

The term arnis evokes a number of reactions from people every time it is mentioned in a conversation, at least here in the Philippines. Some people start fanning their hands in the air, imitating the distinctive movements of the two-stick (*doble baston*) training method. This image of arnis is one of the most popular ones here as far as laypeople are concerned. A second reaction among Filipinos, quite as common as the first one mentioned, is the question, “*Saan ba talaga galing ang arnis?*” (Where did arnis really come from?) Alternatively, “*Di ba, sa atin nanggaling ang arnis?*” (Isn’t it that arnis came from us?) This article is a preliminary attempt to critically examine some of the claims about the origins of one of the martial arts of the Philippines, *arnis*. It is not meant to be a final statement on the subject, but rather a re-examination of what has been said about the origins of arnis.



Arnis, alternatively known as kali, eskrima, baston, etc, is a complete martial art system. It encompasses weapons training and empty-hand combat and self-defense. The curriculum of most styles includes training in any or all of the following: single stick techniques (*solo baston*), stick or sword and knife/dagger techniques (*espada y daga*), dagger or knife techniques (*daga*), single sword or bolo (*espada/itak*) and double sword or bolo (*doble espada/itak*). Some styles may even include staff (*sibat*) and spear (*bangkaw*) training in their curriculum. Many styles have some form of empty hand combat methods, encompassing striking, kicking, locking, throwing and even choking techniques. These are usually taught when the practitioner has demonstrated a reasonable degree of proficiency with the weapons of his or her style of arnis. Different arnis styles, from different parts of the country, may emphasize different areas of the training methods listed above.

A note on the terms used: Arnis is the term most often associated with the Filipino martial arts. As martial art systems, or styles, the various forms of arnis emphasize weaponry at their core, with empty-hand skills complementing skill in weaponry. The term arnis is believed to be a Tagalog pronunciation of the Spanish word *arnes* or harness, a reference to the decorations on the arms worn by the early Filipinos. Kali or kalis is an alternate term used for arnis by some styles. The literal meaning of kalis is sword, a reference to the primacy of bladed weapons in several styles of Filipino martial arts. Eskrima is based on the Spanish word *esgrima*, meaning fencing, again another reference to bladed combat. Yet, while the term Filipino martial arts or FMA for short is used to refer to the weapon arts of the Philippines, in actuality, there are other martial arts such as kungfu and silat that are of local origin. These arts teach empty-hand combat first and weapon use at a later stage.

For purposes of this article, we will consider three claims as to the origins of arnis. The first claim is that it originally came from another martial art system, namely *tjakalele silat*. The second claim is that it was brought here from the Southeast Asian mainland, during the Madjapahit and Shri-Vishayan empires. The third claim is that it was propagated by the so-called ten Bornean datu fleeing persecution from their homeland. These assertions will be examined one at a time separately. In addition, the

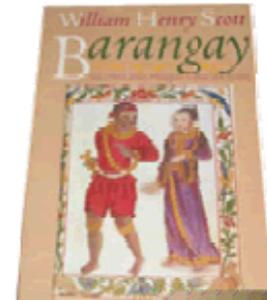
term *arnis* will be used throughout the article to mean the weapon arts of the Philippines, except where reference is made to *kali* or *kalis*. The choice of the term to stand for all three terms is purely arbitrary and for convenience and is not meant to deny or downgrade styles that use the other two terms to identify themselves.

The claim that *arnis* or *kali* was based upon another martial art system called *tjakalele silat* (of Indonesian origin) is based upon the supposed similarity of their respective names. Thus, swordsmanship is known as *kali* or *kalis*, meaning sword, and this in turn is quite close to the name *tjakalele*. Hence, based on such a tenuous similarity, it is hereby claimed that *arnis* or *kali* was derived from *tjakalele silat*. The major difficulty with this claim is that linguistic similarity is not enough to prove that *arnis* or *kalis* did definitely come from *tjakalele silat*. An examination of available published material on *tjakalele* reveals that it is actually a war dance and not a martial style (Draeger 1992 [1972]). The available photographs do not show any similarity to any style of *arnis* or *kali*. Hence, this particular claim of origin should not be treated as some sort of statement of fact.

A second claim as to the origin of *arnis* is that it was brought here during the Shri-Vishayan (7th-14th centuries) and Madjapahit (13th-16th centuries) empires. This reflects the notion that the Philippines was an integral part of both empires and that it was a cross-roads for trade within both empires. The archaeological evidence, however, for the role of the Philippines in both empires is very meager. About the best that could be said is that there was indeed commercial contact, but whether such contact also included the spreading of martial arts is circumstantial at best and not readily provable.

The third claim is that *kali* or *arnis* was brought to the Philippines by ten Bornean *datu* (sometimes nine), who fled the oppression of their ruler or sultan. They settled in the Philippines and taught their fighting systems along with other arts in the academies called the *bothoan*. Much of what is known about the story of the ten Bornean *datu* comes from the *Maragtas* of Pedro Monteclaro, published in Iloilo in 1901, and from the narrative of Fr. Tomas Santaren, published in 1858. The problem here is that the usefulness of the *Maragtas* as an eyewitness account of actual events has been questioned by scholars such as the late William Henry Scott and F. Landa Jocano. The latter in particular questions the authenticity of the *Maragtas* on the following points: 1) it is apparent that although attempts have been made to interpret the *Maragtas* as a historical document, it is actually a record of local folklore, in particular narratives pertaining to events alleged to have happened a long time ago and passed on through subsequent generations; 2) internal features of the document, such as the identification of plants of South American origin and the use of terms for money indicate a Spanish provenance, thus making it likely that the *Maragtas* was written sometime during the Spanish period and not during pre-Hispanic times (Jocano 1975). If the *Maragtas* is actually classifiable as folklore and not as history, then the claims of *arnis* or *kali* being taught in the *bothoan* as introduced by the ten *datu* should be seen in the same light. The claim to historical roots in the legend of the ten Bornean *datu* places this version of the origin of *arnis/kali* in the realm of folklore. This is not to downgrade or look down upon folkloric history, for it serves its purpose in enabling practitioners to identify with and perhaps embody the warrior ethic involved in the practice of martial arts. However in any discussion of the historical roots of martial arts, close attention should be paid to the distinctions between documented history and folkloric history.

If, after having critically examined the narratives of the origins of kali (or arnis or eskrima) and having come to the positions stated above, what statement can we then make about the origins of this form of Filipino martial arts? Regardless of the name of the art or its sources, the fact that the early Filipinos practiced some form of combat was not lost on the Spaniards who first arrived here. Pigafetta's narration of the death of Magellan is graphic in its description of the weapons wielded by the natives. Magellan was wounded in the thigh by a spear and died as he was rushed by the defenders armed with spears and bladed weapons, e.g., swords. Further proof of knowledge of combat is found in Scott's *Barangay* (1994). This book is an ethno-historical reconstruction of early Philippine cultures based upon the documents and more importantly the dictionaries compiled by the earliest Spanish explorers. An entire chapter is devoted to Bisayan weapons and warfare and in it we find a short description of the kalis, or the sword. There is no description of any styles or schools of martial arts, which leads to the interesting observation that our ancient ancestors practiced swordsmanship, or kalis, without any documented distinction as to style or school. Kalis or kali is therefore not a style but simply the generic term for sword. Nor could it be shown to be the mother art of all Filipino martial arts, as there is insufficient evidence to show the predominance or even the existence of any such martial art style even during ancient times. There is only the use of the sword and by implication, proficiency in it. The proliferation of names for different methods of combat belongs to a later age.



A parallel example of this is the recent history of karate, the martial art of Okinawa and Japan. Prior to the 19th and 20th centuries, the art of karate was simply known as *te*, or hand. *Te* was taught privately and in small groups. It was only when the art became institutionalized in the Japanese school system and later on commercialized that the art became known through the different style names founded by different teachers. The same process occurred in the spreading of arnis within the Philippines and later on throughout the world. In the beginning, practitioners were simply known for their skill in weapons and unarmed combat. In particular, many of them were famous for their abilities in particular techniques and methods of combat, such as solo baston, espada y daga, etc. As their popularity grew and the numbers of students began to increase, the necessity of naming their arts and forming associations became evident. Hence, what started out as skill in methods and techniques became styles and associations. With the formation of styles and associations also came the need for institutional memory, thus the different claims of origins of styles.

Martial arts, in whatever form and in whatever place, are the unique product of the people who created them, as members of their culture. Wushu, taekwondo, muay Thai, etc, are all imbued with the values and habits of the cultures from which they sprang. Similarly, kali, arnis or eskrima are also the product of the Filipino cultural and historical experience. The manner in which most practice sessions are conducted, for example is a reflection of the importance placed on harmonious relationships with others. To state therefore that its origins lie outside the Philippines is misleading, for it disregards the unrecorded but no less real experiences our forefathers went through in simply doing their best to survive. These experiences are recorded in the techniques of

their styles of arnis. Blending from other styles may occur but this is a separate topic in itself, outside the scope of this article.

A major issue in researching the origins of arnis is the predominance of oral history and folklore in the recorded narratives, such as articles and books on arnis. By themselves, both oral history and folklore are not problematic, except for the fact that the tone of the various publications available suggests that they are taken as gospel truth. Hence, their authenticity in terms of available and verifiable data to support them is always open to challenge. This is not to say that oral history and folklore are useless or should be disregarded in the study of the origins of arnis. On the contrary, even if available evidence does not support statements derived from them, they are still useful in that both types of sources give us insights into how practitioners think and feel about their respective arts and their place in society. They act, metaphorically, as anchors in society, giving practitioners a sense of place in the history and culture of the Philippines. For example, even if the claim of links to the so-called *bothoan* is historically suspect, the act of claiming such links imbues the practitioner with a sense of grandeur in his/her link to a distant, although romanticized past. The act of claiming such a lineage is a powerful tool for capturing and shaping the imagination, thereby empowering the practitioner in his/her continued quest to achieve perfection in martial skills.

In conclusion, arnis (or kali or eskrima) can be said to be of local origin, although the issue remains as to the extent of foreign influence upon the different styles of arnis. It is a product of the experience of local practitioners past and present as they engaged in conflict with others and strove to survive. Foreign influences crop up here and there but on the whole, arnis still retains its local flavor. The tracing of the roots of the art of arnis, kali and eskrima is very much a work in progress, with all the debates and points of contention that crop up every now and then. There may never even be closure at all of this research, but this should be seen in a positive light, for each debate, each challenge raises new questions that need to be answered. In a way, interest in and growth of the arts will always be ensured through this dynamic process.

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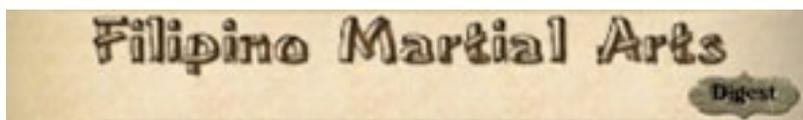




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