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Informative

Propagating the Filipino Martial Arts and the Culture of the Philippines

Informative Issue No. 15
2012

The APO - *Balintawak Eskrima Self Defense*

The Organization is headed by Martial Arts Guru Andrew P. Obon.

This is APO-Balintawak as a Combat and Self Defense System.



The APO-Balintawak Self Defense System

3 Rules of Engagement
Three Core Values

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Simplicity - A Salient Feature of Balintawak Eskrima - Guru Andrew P. Obon

“True refinement seeks simplicity.” - Bruce Lee

When Guru Obon first learned the Balintawak Eskrima System under Master Tinong Ibanez in 1974, He was impressed with its simplicity and blowing movements.

It looks simple but he found it quite difficult to learn at first. This was because he had to undo his adopted posture and footwork which he acquired from other martial arts during his youth. In addition to that, Guru Obon had to empty his cup of tea and learn with an open mind.

As Guru Obon gradually familiarize himself with the natural movements of Balintawak, He began to realize that he was transforming back to the time he knew nothing about structured martial arts. Guru Obon felt like a toddler learning to walk again. This is because Balintawak is anchored on simplicity of form and movement.

Its emphasis on short and shallow footwork, economy of movement - add up to its State of being Simple. This enhances flexibility and effectiveness. Amid its simplicity, there are a few exceptions such as its “kawayan” maneuvers also known as “bambooing” - mimicking the pliant quality of a bamboo flowing in the wind. The maneuvers, however, is situational and occasionally used.

Another simplicity trait is its generally linear Strikes. It is a truism that the nearest distance between two points is a straight line. It is out of practicality that its strikes are delivered along a linear place; to hit its target at the shortest time possible. Its strikes are direct, short, and stemless.

Defensive maneuvers are also simple, direct, and natural in their movements. Although blocking technique are somewhat structured, its ultimate simplicity is either a direct hit to the weapon hand or side step away from the line of attack, and simultaneously deliver a strike as defense.

Its simplicity that allows techniques to flow as if they are one Continuous sequence. This is called “decadena” or chain like movement - where one technique follows another in a continuous fashion.

In the words of Master Ibanes, “Master the basics of Balintawak Eskrima and you will discover the rest of the techniques in due time.”

Yes, Master the basics in simplifying the process in the learning curve. And, this may be its secret to simplicity.

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Guru Andrew P. Obon with the APO-Balintawak Self Defense Club Key Officers 2011

The APO-Balintawak Self Defense System

It is said that a true martial artist is one who is mild outside but strong within. With this as the objective, the APO-Balintawak Group understands, believes, acts and sacrifices (UBAS) to inculcate among its advocates the Rules of Engagement, Values and Virtues with the chief definite aim of molding each practitioner to live the way of a true martial artist.

On the outset, to achieve the end, one must first reap and nurture the seed of UBAS (Visayan term for grapes) among each and every member-practitioners.

The student must first understand the Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives of the APO-Balintawak Group, and its Value System. Only then can each member believe and act out by walking the talk, and sacrifice to achieve in what he or she understands, believes and acts on these. In other words, we have to mature and grow in our value of UBAS and link this to the other sub-value system, as follows:

The 3 Rules of Engagement:

Rule No. 1 - Avoidance. Stay away from places, situations or people who are sources of potential danger. This is a pro-active self-defense measure that is better safe than sorry.

Rule No. 2 - Defensive. If you must fight then do so only to the extent of defending yourself or your interest with just enough force as necessary. Do not maim, kill or destroy.

Rule No. 3 - Win-Win. The ultimate is to be able to win without fighting. Talk your way out into victory. This is the essence of a

true martial artist.

The Rules of Engagement by themselves cannot be fully complied with unless a martial artist first conquers himself or herself. To help temper ourselves, we advocate and instill within us the three core values and the ten virtues, as discussed below:

The Three Core Values are:

(1) Self-Discipline. It is the disciplining of oneself or one's desires, habits, etc. that would be detrimental to oneself or to others in relation to your inner self.

(2) Self Control. It is the control of oneself or one's own emotions, desires, action, etc. in relation to social norms or external regulations.

(3) Respect. To feel or show honor or esteem for others. We have to respect ourselves first if we want others to respect us. Respect begets respect.

To conquer oneself is still not enough. The Three Core Values must be reinforced with the Ten Virtues of B.A.L.I.N.T.A.W.A.K., as discussed below:

1) Benevolence - an inclination to do good, charitable acts or gift for others. A repetition of this act will develop into the habit of sharing and giving to those in need. A cheerful heart is one who gives.

2) Altruism - unselfish concern for the welfare of others or selflessness. This also means to put others first before oneself, especially those who are weak and have less in life.

3) Loyalty - a quality, state or instance of loyalty, faithfulness or faithful adherence to a person,

organization, cause, duty, etc.

Hence, be loyal to your teacher or master, to your friends, etc.

4) Integrity - the quality or state of being of sound moral principle, uprightness, honesty, and sincerity. This is the mother of all virtues. It is putting into action what is morally right even if nobody is watching. An example is disposing your waste properly.

5) Nationalism – devotion to one's country, culture, heritage, etc. As such, it is but proper that we, Filipinos, promote and pressure our heritage like our combat arts.

6) Temperance - the state or quality of being moderate, self-restraint in conduct, expression, etc. A person of temperance has control over his anger even when under agitation. His mind is like a calm pool which reflects its surrounding like a mirror. Hence, he can anticipate and be pro-active in his strategy in combat or life's challenges. This virtue plays a significant role in the observance of the rules of engagement.

7) Awakening - the act of being aware, or realizing something unpleasant in oneself, environment, society and exert effort to improve on the condition or concern.

8.) Wisdom - the quality or state of being wise; power of judging rightly and following the soundest course of action based on knowledge, experience, understanding, etc. This is akin to critical thinking or an analytical mindset. It can be nurtured. Simply, it means think and analyze well before you act.

This would prevent and/or minimize many unnecessary mistakes or blunders. Wisdom also comes with open-mindedness.

Hence, a wise man may learn from a fool but never otherwise.

9) Attitude (of humility) – ones disposition, opinion, mental set, etc. An Arnisador must nurture a winner's attitude inside him but regulated with humility outwardly. The attitude of being mild outside but strong within should be prac-

ticed by all Arnisadors.

10) Kindness - the state or habit of being kind. Some of the different ways of kindness are – being sympathetic, friendly, helpful, gentle, tender-hearted, and generous. A kind-hearted person is a happy person. And a happy person makes no enemy.

Equipped with the three rules of engagement; the three core values; and the ten virtues, a true Arnisador can walk the talk like a real winner. One who is mild outside but strong within. One who can win without fighting. This is the ultimate in today's martial arts.

Basic Principles of Balintawak Eskrima

“For 50 years of learning martial arts, this is the first time Guru Obon saw a perfect and complete style of martial arts. It is very simple but complete. Congratulations to you Master Andrew.” Rene Plee (10th Dan Karate Black Belt; the Father of European Karate - France).

In order for a martial arts system to attain optimal effectiveness and efficiency, it is important to know the principles behind its technical execution. Discussed below are some of the basic principles, among others, of Balintawak Eskrima:

Footworks. Balintawak, being a very fast and dynamic combat art has no stances; so to speak. Its footwork is akin to western boxing.

This is in contrast to Karate and some other oriental martial arts, and even various styles of Eskrima. All of them deploy stances to execute their various techniques.

However, Balintawak being a purely combat art has to adapt to a fluid or constantly moving posture. Hence, in response to this, it uses a flexible footwork to cope with the constantly changing center of gravity or equilibrium. The corridas drills (give and take) display the interplay of footwork in offensive and defensive maneuvers.

To keep it simple, Balintawak Eskrima has six basic footwork used in combination, namely: right lead and left lead; rear right and rear left; and oblique

right and oblique left lead. The variant of this footwork are done through integration of dipping, shuffling, bambooning, and combination spontaneous movements.

The Flexible, Agile, and Stable Footwork of Balintawak Eskrima are attributed to the following:

1. It uses short pace, the distance between forward and rear foot, at one shoulder width by one shoulder length apart or slightly longer depending on the practitioner's height. More or less, its footwork would appear to have an isosceles triangular base support posture. Hence, its base is stable on all sides while at the same time promotes speed.

2. Both knees are slightly bent with raised heel of the foot that carries the least weight. Normally, when at defensive posture, the heel of the



Guru Andrew P. Obon and Mel Balberde exhibiting combat with foot technique



Guru Obon and Rojelio Pepito Jr.

front foot is slightly raised. Then, when switching into the offensive posture, the heel of the rear foot is raised at the impact of the strike.

3. The complimentary interplay of leg, hip, shoulder and arm muscles which contribute to the momentum of speed and power. The switching from defense to offense posture creates the momentum of speed and power, and is further enhanced by the pushing of the rear leg and twisting of the hip and finally into the torque of the waist all the way to the tip portion of the cane as it hits its target. The hip muscles are slower to react, so remember to twist the hip a split second ahead to obtain optimal muscle synchronization to generate fast and strong blows.

Lightning Strikes: All attacks or strikes are delivered with an element of surprise. Hence, it must show no hint of a wind-up. Its moves or intentions must be non-telegraphic. Also, use short or stemless strikes. This is more effective and harder to block than extended or stem strike. The more you stretch your arm out, the more open you become. Remember the area you are protecting should not be open when you deliver your strike. Hence, even when you strike, you must minimize exposure to the area of your body which you ought to protect. This is maintaining a balance between offense and defense.

The shortest between two points is a straight line. Hit directly into the target without any circular motions. Circular or flowery strikes are good to look at but it may cost you your route life in actual combat. Straight line concept of direct strikes, also allows faster recovery in preparation for subsequent offense or defense



Guru Obon and Rojelio Pepito Jr.

maneuvers. Again, deliver your strike from where your weapon is positioned without the slightest indication of intention.

Optimal Defense: As effective block is executed fast and strong enough to stop the momentum of the offense, and extended only at a distance necessary to absorb the incoming impact. Never block with your arm extended far out. In a close quarter encounter, defend as if your blocking arm is hinged to your side. As you twist your hip, your blocking arm should go with it. More often than not, block at the center of your weapon to effectively diffuse the impact of the blow. Also, block with the perceived bladed edge of your



Guru Obon and Rojelio Pepito Jr.

weapon, so that it is executed with the fore first instead of a semi-back fist, for optimal efficiency. When blocking, body position faces a 45 degrees angle to the left side at rear left and to the right side at rear right. When blocking against a left or high body thrust, simultaneously draw your shoulder backwards as a compliment in evading thrust blows. This is necessary since a thrust travel faster than an arch strike (nos. 1 and 2.)

For a block to catch up with the speed of a strike, it must begin as soon as the strike is initiated. This way, the block will meet the strike about mid-way when the full potential of its power is at 50 percent. For very strong strikes, especially those delivered with heavier cane, an augmented block may be necessary. This is done by using the forearm of the free hand to support behind the block, rather than using the hand. This allows the free hand to grab the opponent cane upon impact.

Enhancing Speed: The importance of speed is best expressed in the following phrases:

“When the opponent cuts you through your skin, cut him through his bone.” Samurai Maxim

A split of a second would spell the difference between life and death in mortal combat. This is the reason why the strikes, counter strikes, and blocks of Balintawak Eskrima generally follow the direction of gravity.

Never sacrifice speed for power. If there is speed, there is power and not the other way around. Speed is an important element of surprise in the technical execution of offense, defense, and counter strikes.

Another way to attain

optimal speed is to improve one’s reflexes. This is done by maintaining a calm mind like a pool of still water that reflects its surroundings. But when it ripples, it loses its clear reflection. Reaction should follow immediately upon recognition of the threat. Stay relaxed but mentally alert, like a wild cat hunting for its prey. Move in fast for the kill and tense your muscles with a twist at the point of impact. The harmony of muscle movement

contributes to enhancing speed in motion. The muscle system is relaxed immediately after the strike or block, or after a series when needed so.

Shorten your weapon: Use your weapon up to the limit of its effectiveness. This is why Balintawak Eskrimadors are both adept in weapons and bare-hands self-defense when hitting with the cane is no longer effective due to limited space between you and

your opponent. Use your elbows and knees, for close combat. When your opponent blocks your strike, shorten your stick into and elbow strike. In other words, why hit with the stick when a punch is more effective, and why punch when an elbow strike is more appropriate, and so on. The switching from one weapon to another must be spontaneous and natural.

“It is not a destination but a journey; it is a way of life.” Andrew P. Obon (APO)



Guru Andrew P. Obon - Balintawak Self-Defense Organization

Balintawak Eskrima 12-Basic Defense

BLOCK AGAINST STRIKE NO.	LEG MOVEMENT	HAND/WEAPON MOVEMENT	REMARKS
1	From ready position at right lead, Shift body weight to left rear	Inside block, arm slightly extended, left hand at check position in front of chest	Left hand stays at retaining check after each block
2	Step back into right rear	Outside block with arm slightly extended, left hand at check position	-do-
3	Shift into left lead	Outside downward block with simultaneous left palm check-block	Shuffle forward Slightly at close gap if necessary
4	Step back into left rear, knees bent lower	Low outside block with left hand check	May shuffle forward to close distance, if necessary
5	Step back into left rear, slightly chaffed backward	Simultaneously execute inside block with left palm outside parry, finger tips pointing downward	Weapon is held upright when blocking, at low left rear, to adapt to low thrust
6	Step forward into right rear	Outward block with left hand check	Shuffle forward to close distance if necessary
7	Step back into left rear	Inward block with left hand check	
8	Slide into low right lead	Downward inside block left palm check	Keep body upright by bending at the knees and not at the waist
9	Step into left lead	Downward outside block with left palm check	Keep body upright by bending at the knees and not at the waist
10	Shuffle forward into right rear	Outward block with left hand check	Shuffle forward to close the distance
11	Step back into left rear	Inward block with left hand check	Block on forearm
12a	Remain at left rear	Simultaneous high outward sweeping block with left palm inside parry	The outward block and left hand parry are done simultaneously and follow through with a grub pull
12b	Step back into left lead	Grab and pull opponent at his wrist; then release grab to slip out weapon hand; apply retaining check with left hand and prepare to strike	The grab at the wrist is released to allow your weapon to ship through to facilitate a downward strike to the forehead

NOTE: In Balintawak Eskrima, Inward and outward blocks are delivered with your stick upright-block directly into the direction of the Strike.



Defense no.1



Defense no.2



Defense no.3



Defense no.4



Defense no.5



Defense no.6



Defense no.7



Defense no.8



Defense no.9



Defense no.10



Defense no.11



Defense no.12

Balintawak Eskrima 12-Basic Strikes

STRIKE NO	LEG MOVEMENT	ARM MOVEMENT	FOCAL POINT
1	Right lead	Right inward Strike	Left temple
2	Left lead	Right outward Strike	Right temple
3	Maintain left lead	Retract, right outward strike	Right floating ribs/Kidney
4a	Shift body weight to rear leg, raise left heel	Retract weapon hand to side of right hip	Left floating ribs/Kidney
4b	Shift back to left lead	Right inward strike	Left floating ribs/Kidney
5	Slide forward with left lead	Right center thrust	Navel
6	Step back into right lead	Thrust	Genital area
7	Step into left lead	Left arm raise or open palm defense, and deliver right thrust	Left breast
8	Retract left leg into low right lead	Right inside low strike	Left knee
9	Side-step into diagonal left lead	Right outside low strike	Right knee
10	Step back into right lead	Right inside thrust	Right eye
11	Step forward into left lead	Right outside thrust	Left eye
12	Maintain left lead	Center downward Strike	Crown of head



Strike no. 1



Strike no. 2



Strike no. 3



Strike no. 4



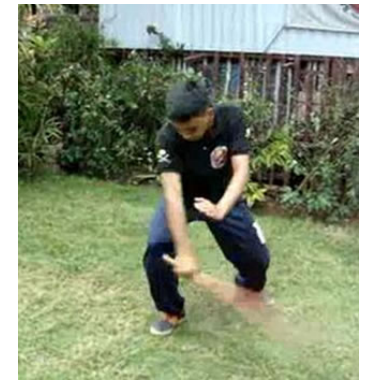
Strike no. 5



Strike no. 6



Strike no. 7



Strike no. 8



Strike no. 9



Strike no. 10



Strike no. 11



Strike no. 12

The Principle of Compensation

This principle in Balintawak Eskrima seeks to equalize the speed of offense with that of defense. It is said that offense is faster than defense. This is because offense usually have the advantage of head-start and builds up its momentum with a series of offensive moves.

In Balintawak Eskrima, offense is just as fast as defense. This is because we start to block the strike as it takes off. This system is known for its formidable defensive maneuvers.

This way, the block would meet the strike midway to its intended target and intercept the strike when its speed and power are still half its potential.

The Principle of Simultaneous Actions

In Balintawak Eskrima, the principle combines offense and defense into one movement, making it a complete technique in itself. It is aimed at hitting two birds with one stone. The principle turns an offense into defense and vice versa. It deploys a combination of strikes from three, four, and even five consecutive blows. The strikes are executed in rapid transition of flowing motion.

These combo strikes were developed and handed down by the old Eskrima Grandmasters of Panay, who have authorized CASASAI Grandmaster Melicio Balberde to teach and propagate their various masterpieces.

The combo-strikes combine offense, defense, and counter strikes into one. It is also known as the "three in one technique." It gives the practitioner a single fo-

cus; to strike with speed and accuracy. It also enhances the principle of instinctive action.

APO-Balintawak Eskrima, being an affiliate of CASASAI also teaches the combo strikes to its advance students. On the other side of the coin is the need to defend effectively against these combo strikes, and for our group to be familiar with the other Eskrima styles.

The Principle of Half-Timing

This principle in Balintawak Eskrima compliments that of compensation. When both combatants are on the offensive, a Balintawak Eskrimador would more often than not pull back his weapon to defend first rather than engage in a blow to blow exchange.

The principle here for Balintawak Eskrima is defense paramount to offense. When you and your opponent simultaneously attack each other, it is proper that you draw back your weapon to defend first before you counter.

Do not risk being hit in the middle of a simultaneous exchange of attacks. It is logical to counter from a strong defense than to attack from a weak defensive position. Remember also that the part you are protecting is open when you attack.

The Split Second Advantage

“When your opponent cuts you through your skin, cut him through his bone.” - Samurai Maxim

A split second advantage could spell a significant difference in the Combat Arts. But speed alone is nothing unless your strike is properly delivered and focused on a select vital point on your opponent.

An Eskrima or Arnis strike should hit its target in less than 2/10th of a second. This way, a properly delivered strike can knock down, maim or even kill your opponent in just one stroke of the weapon. It is like knocking down your opponent with a lucky punch to his jaw.

Is this blinding strike possible? A noted Grandmaster of Eskrima during an interview in a local TV said that in his hey days he could deliver five or more strikes in a second.

Let's analyze the speed behind Balintawak Eskrimador's strike. The way the cane is positioned and held, and the method the flow is delivered would further reduce the 2/10th of a second.

A Balintawak stylist normally positioned his cane directly in front in an upright fashion, even when blocking most of the different angle strikes. In this position, a

block or counter strike and offense can be executed split of second faster. This is done by slight twist of the hip couple with inward or outward body torque motion, as applicable. The torque to deliver a fast and strong blow comes from a ripple effect starting with the twisting push from the rear foot all the way to the hip, upper torso, arm and snapping of the wrist. The loosening up after each strike or series of combo blows is also very important to prepare for the next blitz.

The principle of “Mushin” is also paramount in attaining optimum speed and timing in the technical execution of your skills in combat and practice sparring. When you focus your mind on anticipation of possible attack or defense maneuvers of your opponent, you are actually putting yourself in a box. You deprive yourself from thinking outside the box. Hence, you would be unable to effectively attack, block and counter strike in response to anything outside of your anticipation or imagination. This robs you of your potential capabilities from attaining its optimum performance.

A mind like a calm pool would be able to mirror or reflect all images within its scope. A

slight ripple would distort all images. Fight with a calm composure and maintain normal and correct breathing. This would enhance your action and reaction time.

More often than not, we deliver our strikes towards the flow of gravity. This further enhances the speed of our strike coupled with our short but dynamic footwork similar to that of boxing. This gives added speed and flexibility, enhancing our technical execution.

A complete strike or block should be consummated simultaneously with the completion of the advancing or retreating motion of your footwork to optimize the impact. The logic behind this is that the shorter your footwork, the faster is the reaction and competition of your offensive or defensive maneuvers. Shorter footwork also allows you to close the gap between you and your opponent faster. Thus, you can easily maintain an effective fighting distance where you can comfortably attack and defense. This is especially true to a Balintawak stylist, to allow him to better control his opponent. This also allows effective execution of close quarter techniques for which the art is known for.

Now that you know this, it is time to act. Cut away from un-

necessary or flowery movements to the bone. Work on what is essential. Simplify to refine. You would be surprised on your new found speed.



Guru Andrew P. Obon and Rojelio Pepito Jr. executes disarming techniques

Balintawak Eskrima Sparring

“Wing Chun fist and Balintawak is almost the same... The footwork and the defense...And I want that the two martial arts will be recognized by nearly everyone. So let's support Balintawak and Wing Chun at its best...” Wing Chun Master Laofan (Hong Kong)

In the discipline of this system, Sparring is defined as a Practice Fighting between two equally competent practitioners of the art in a give and take exchange of defensive and offensive maneuvers; employing all applicable techniques of the art.

The following and the main objectives of Balintawak Eskrima sparring:

1. To enhance speed and accuracy of reflex action. Both of these qualities complement each other.
2. To develop balance and coordination of the different movements and parts of the body; the human weapon.
3. To become familiar with the dynamic Situation, Simulating Real Combat.
4. To develop quickness and ac-

curacy of perception in relation to the principle of Mushin.

5. To cultivate good judgement in the application of appropriate techniques at the right timing and the proper distance.

The Building Phase

At the basic level, the novice starts with the block-and-counter drills against the 12-angle of attacks delivered by his Senior partner. The 12-angle of attacks are then randomized to develop accuracy of reflex action, agility, balance, coordination, fluidity of movement and proper posture.

After this drill, and once the student gains proficiency, he will move on to learn the basic offensive maneuvers on delivering the 12-angle of attacks, blocking and deliver corresponding counter



Fulgent Opiso (left), Michael Soriano (right) - sparring

attacks. The attack and defense maneuvers against the counter strikes are being controlled and guided by the attacker's free hand. The drill is called “agak” or guiding. In this drill, the junior partner's blocks and all counter attacks are guided and controlled by the senior partner's free hand. The attacker's free hand is used skillfully to control, guide, create openings, and intercept or check his partner's counter

attacks. At the intermediate level, the free hand is also utilized for offensive maneuvers like punching, grabbing, push and pull.

Once the student attains proficiency in “agak”, he then proceeds to switching of roles or “palusot” drill. In this drill, the practice partners switch roles from defender or counter-attacker to that of attacker and vice-versa, at any point of the corridas or give-and-take drill. The switching of roles back and forth is done spontaneously and flowing without interruption or pause.

The Strengthening Phase

After the foundation has been established, he can then proceed to the intermediate level. In this level, the basic maneuvers and movements are strengthened through the integration of group techniques. This is similar to pre-arranged sparring, only that the movements are spontaneous and flowing. Role switching is also practiced in this drill.

The corridas drills of the different group techniques will further enhance the skills of the practitioner on the various qualities mentioned earlier in the objectives of sparring. In this stage, the practitioner will develop his skills to effectively attack, defend, and counter attack against the various



Corridas drill with Guru Obon and Rojelio Pepito Jr.

offensive and defensive techniques.

One the practitioner becomes proficient with the corridas and group techniques, he will then be taught on how to switch roles from defender to attacker and vice versa. This is done in smooth transition without pre-arrangements between partners.

The Sharpening Phase

In this phase, the practitioner is being sharpened just like a machete blade. He is now ready to enter into the threshold of the Balintawak Eskrima counter-to-counter and re-counter method of in-fighting in the advance level. In this phase, the group techniques will be applied and analyzed thoroughly in the perspective of an attacker and a defender. Each role player will look for strategies in tying to counter and re-counter the various situations presented by each group techniques.

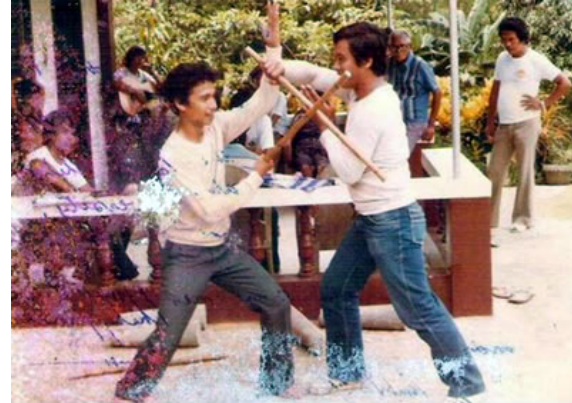
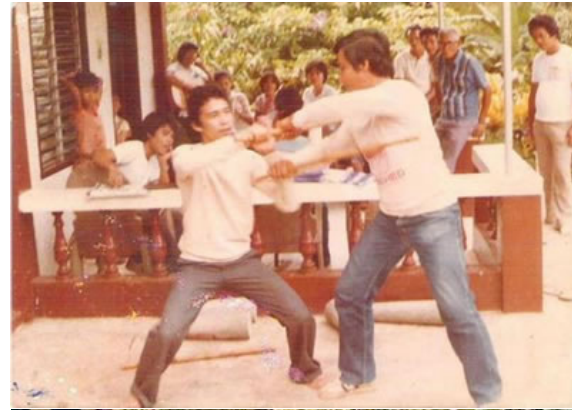
The objective here is to counter and re-counter each offensive or defensive maneuvers until one of the partner can no longer re-counter. This calls for creative and analytical thinking of both partners. Many of the solutions come from thinking outside the box.

In this system, all attacks can be blocked and all counter attacks has its corresponding re-counter attacks.

Fighting techniques of other styles are also being studied and analyzed according to their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats vis-a-vis the

Balintawak Eskrima System.

The APO-Balintawak at this phase also integrates the combo strikes adopted from CASASAI, courtesy of Grandmaster Melicio Balberde. These combo strikes developed by the old masters of Panay are noted for their



Demo by Guru Obon and Melicio Balberde

simultaneous offense and defense techniques in one strike or series of strikes.

The Instinctive Action Phase

An Eskrimador who has attained the stage of instinctive action, has developed his sixth sense. At this stage, he has complete control of his emotions and feelings. He exudes with calmness and detachment even when in the midst of a deadly combat. This State is also akin to what the Japanese calls as “mushin” which means “let your mind flow.” Bruce Lee explained this state in the following words; “...it is when you act with unconscious awareness, you just act... it just happens.”

This state goes beyond what we call “cuentada” or to anticipate the intentions of one’s opponent. The “cuentada” is developed through “hikap” or feeling. This is when you establish contact with your partner at close quarter sparring. The slight physical contact with your hands will help you anticipate your partner’s intentions through feeling.

The half-timing drill in Balintawak Eskrima also develops instinctive reflex. This was how Grandmaster Tinong Ibanes won over his opponent in a death match which was held during one of the town fiesta in Cebu. After blocking the strike of his Punta y daga opponent, he could have delivered a counter strike. Instead, he blocked the follow-up daga thrust by delivering a snap strike to the dagger hand of his opponent.

His opponent was immediately disarmed at the impact



Knife Combat Exhibition by Michael Soriano and Don Tenio Dumadag

of the strike. Master Ibanes then immediately followed up with at least two combo strikes to the opponent’s head. These strikes sent his opponent sprawling on the ground. The fight was immediately stopped. This was the last death match sanctioned by Grandmaster Anciong Bacon. This put an end to the question as to which Eskrima

The Value Added of Shadow Fighting Practice

“A once fluid man, crammed and distorted by the classical mess” – Bruce Lee’s miniature tombstone

On the outset, Balintawak Eskrima does not advocate the practice of any kind of formal forms or dances, where techniques are pre-arranged in a set pattern. The nearest it has, that may resemble a form, are its 12-basic strikes; 12 basic defense; and 12-basic defense and counter strikes, when done without a partner these basic techniques are performed in consecutive order from numbers 1-12, to facilitate checking for proper posture and footwork in the basic technical execution. These are, however, not meant to be treated as formal form exercises.

Why do other oriental martial arts and even other Eskrima

styles have created their own unique sets of formal forms?

Master Richard Chun of the Moo Duk Kwon, answers this question, “...the objective was to promote a means of training their students to perform the basic techniques in continuous sequence, so that they should be able to defend themselves against more than one opponent, and in any direction, for as long as was necessary without tiring.”

It may be noted, that both practice of formal forms and shadow fighting develop and promote balance, accuracy, concentration, coordination, and endurance. The

style is the best.

As you get used to sparring, you will gradually develop instinctive action. This is better known as muscle memory. In this stage, you will be able to block, counter and re-counter, and even attack without conscious thinking. This is what is called mushin. This is responding to an action without thinking. It just blocks, hits with the hand, wielding the weapon.

Unmasking the Real Beauty of Balintawak Eskrima

The beauty of this system is not the finger-pointing to the moon. Its beauty goes beyond that. This system has only one focus and that is combat or preparing for the real thing. Hence, each phase of training builds up for the kill; so to speak. The ultimate aim is to be able to effectively and efficiently defend oneself in a real combat situation.

found in formal forms. In essence, it is formless like water.

Shadow fighting provides an avenue to develop and enhance fluidity of movement. The concept and quality of fluidity is necessary to respond spontaneously to offense and defense maneuvers – just like sound and echo. It facilitates smooth flow of techniques from one to another in an unstructured series.

Creativity is another important quality that is developed through unstructured shadow fighting. Creativity is defined as the power to create. It requires intelligence and imagination, not merely mechanical skills. It is a critical visualization of one's imaginary opponent(s), wherein, no round is similar to each other in terms of sequence of techniques or movements. Thus, each round is treated as a new experience. This helps enhance the process of creativity. With creativity comes opportunity to develop offensive and defensive techniques towards their optimal potential.

Balintawak Eskrima shadow fighting can be categorized in many ways:

Category 1: Defense and offense

against single opponent who specializes in - a.) short-range, b.) medium range, c.) long-range fighting

Category 2: Defense and offense against an opponent who specializes in: a.) single-stick, b.) double stick, c.) dagger and stick

Category 3: Defense and offense against an opponent who uses bladed pointed weapons.

Category 4: Fighting more than one opponent at a time, either armed or unarmed or combination thereof.

The variables in shadow fighting are numerous, depending on the level of proficiency and level of creativity of the practitioner.

Some points to be observed in the performance of shadow fighting:

1. While at attention posture, before beginning the shadow fight, take a deep breath, using the diaphragm, and concentrate on what you are about to do.

2. To develop posture and proper technical execution, perform each technique, both offensive and defensive, clearly and completely, before flowing on to the next.

3. Maintain regular breathing using the diaphragm, throughout the performance. Exhale simultaneously upon the full impact at the end of each strike combination.

4. Do not lose focus on the type of imaginary opponent(s) you are fighting. Visualize your perceived opponent without lapses of intervention. Fight as though your opponent is real.

5. Maintain a relaxed composure and tense your muscles only at the point of imaginary impact, either offensive or defensive maneuvers. After each impact, relax your grip so you can act or react faster to the changing situation.

The built-in value added quality of fluidity and creativity, in shadow fighting approach, allow its practitioners, to develop these qualities to its optimal potential, thereby, facilitating improvement and refinement in the technical execution of techniques.

True refinement seeks simplicity. And simplicity is nothing more than going back to what was once fluid. Further, being fluid enhances one's creativity and imagination.



Andrew Pereira Obon was born of Filipino - Malaysian parents on May 19, 1954 in Cabatuan, Iloilo, Philippines. His parents returned to North Borneo (Sabah) as it was known then. There, Andrew grew up and finished junior secondary school in Malaysia. He is the second of eight siblings of five boys and three girls. Andrew is married to Ester Bulfa Ymalay of Negros Oriental. They are blessed with four sons and a daughter.

At 13 years old, Andrew was initiated into the martial arts. He first studied traditional Taekwondo as part of his school's physical fitness program. He later enrolled full time in a local Taekwondo Club in Tawau, Sabah. He also had the opportunity to

Guru Andrew P. Obon

learn Kuntao self-defense from an Indonesian Imam. On weekends, together with a Chinese friend, Andrew studied Chinese boxing, under closed-door, from a local Master.

In early 1972, Andrew and his eldest sister returned to the Philippines to study at the Silliman University, Dumaguete City. In mid of the same year, Andrew continued his martial arts training. He enrolled with the Negros Ori-

in Murcia, Negros Occidental. Andrew was the champion in the black belt division while his team won the overall championship. He was appointed Club Head and Chief Instructor of the APKO Central Gym in Dumaguete City in 1973.

Also, in 1973, Andrew represented APKO in the Regional Open Karate Tournament sponsored by PKA in the West Negros Gym, Bacolod City. Despite the

difficulty to adjust from full contact to PKA point system, Andrew managed to reach the semi-finals.

In 1972, Andrew was conferred the Best Fighter Award in a tournament organized by APKO in Bago City.

After he had gained profi-

ciency in empty hand self-defense, Andrew felt the need to go into weapon training, especially in the art of eskrima/arnis. He started with double baston in 1973, under Master Casimero "Merut" Espina in Dumaguete City. Master Espina was a granduncle by affinity who was then in his late 60's. In the same year, Andrew had lessons in traditional single baston from Master Col. Filisisimo "Momoy" Bulfa, an uncle by affinity. Learning sessions with Master Col. Bulfa was done during his serial visits to Dumaguete City.

As fate had it in 1974, Andrew met the notable death match fighter, the late Master Tinong



Guru Obon participates in KMP Karate Tournament

ental Moo Duk Kwon Tang Soo Do Organization. Its president and Chief Instructor then was Alonso Makilan. Andrew was also a member of the All Philippines Karate-Judo Organization (APKO) under Engr. Narambolo Lopez; Philippine Karate Association (PKA) and Kapisanan ng mga Karatista ng Pilipinas (KMP) headed then by Col. Dante Nagtalon and Roberto Gonzales, respectively.

In 1973, Andrew coached and headed the Dumaguete City delegation to the APKO Open Karate Tournament held



APO Karate Team with 8th Dan Roberto Gonzales



Guru Andrew P. Obon - with his martial arts students

Ibañes of Cebu City. Master Ibañes taught Andrew the original version of Balintawak Eskrima as what he had learned from Grandmaster Venuncio "Ansiong" Bacon (1912-1980). Master Ibañes first started his training in Balintawak under Atty. Jose Villasin who later referred him to Grandmaster Bacon. Master Ibañes taught circular footwork with random integration of techniques.

When Master Ibañes became busy with his personal business in 1976, plying between the cities of Cebu and Dumaguete, Master Nicomedes "Nick" Elizar took over the Dumaguete Balintawak Chapter. Master Elizar is the protege of the late Grandmaster Teofilo Velez of Toevel-Balintawak. Master Elizar is better known for his Nickelstick-Balintawak. He taught the international version of Balintawak as systematized by Atty. Villasin.



Back Row (from 3rd left to right) - Bobby Taboada, Tinong Ibanez, Tiofilo Velez, John Doe, Andrew P. Obon (APO). And Front Row (4th from left) Nick Elizar (Nickelstick) and flanking him are the Velez sons Chito and Ed.

In 1979, Andrew moved to Iloilo City to continue his studies at the Central Philippine University where he graduated. There, he met and trained Meli-

cio "Mel" Balberde who would become one of his notable student and Founder of the now famous CASASAI (Combative and Sportive Arnis System Association,



(Standing from 2nd left to 5th): APO, Tinong Ibanez, Nick Elizar (Nickelstick), Teofilo Velez with some of the Balintawak Chapter Members.

Inc.). CASASAI is based in Iloilo City with international branches in Hong Kong, Jakarta, among others. CASASAI is the current grand slam National Champion of the

Philippine Olympic Arnis Tournament held yearly, both for the Anyo and Labanan Women and Men Divisions.



Guru Obon and Melicio Balberde knife combat exhibition at Leganes Iloilo

While in Iloilo City, Andrew and Mel had an exchange of skills with Master Carmelino Reliesiba. Andrew shared the basics of Balintawak Arnis in exchange for Master Reliesiba's hand-to-hand and knife combat. This interactive learning went on for over a year.

In 1986, Andrew and family returned to Negros Oriental, the home province of his wife. There, he groomed another protégé in the person of Flex

Agbon whose martial skills were duly tested in the slum of Tondo, Manila and in a group attack in Negros Oriental.

In search of greener pasture, the Obons relocated to Misamis Oriental, Mindanao in 1987. While waiting for gainful employment, Andrew opened a self-defense club in Tagoloan town. There he taught Tang Soo Do and Balintawak Eskrima. His club participated in the KMP Open Karate Tournament held in Xavier University Gym, Cagayan de Oro City in 1988. The team was disqualified for its failure to adapt to the point system

rule.

At present, Andrew works for an agro-industrial company in Bukidnon, Mindanao as a supervising agriculturist. To keep fit and brace himself with the martial arts, which has been his passion, Andrew teaches self-defense with Balintawak Eskrima as its base art.

At 57 years old, Andrew is a seasoned martial artist and a veteran tournament fighter. Andrew believes that the best rule of engagement is to win without fighting. After all, the mark of a true martial artist is one who is mild outside but strong within.



THE APO-Balintawak Eskrima Practitioners Oath:

1. I understand, believe, and shall put to practice the values and virtues of Balintawak Eskrima;
2. I believe in its vision, mission, goals and objectives;
3. I shall, with the best of my ability, live out the spirit of a true martial artist; mild outside but strong within;
4. I shall obey all duly constituted authorities; my parents, elders, and mentors; and
5. I shall thrive to be a significant member of society by being a catalyst of change, starting with myself.

SO HELP ME GOD...



Comments

“You bring the right attitude and skills to represent Balintawak. Hope you help all the other Balintawak-families to find the right place in the world of martial-arts and get the mark of respect that they deserve.”

Thorsten (International Balintawak Guru)

“Hope your club will become International; you’re one of the best Masters of Balintawak Eskrima Master Obon.”

Grandmaster Nick Elizar (Nickelstick)

“Master Obon, I would like to promote the style of Balintawak here at Wing Chun HQ, Hong Kong... I watched your students in your video in Youtube, I can say they are one of the elite in Balintawak eskrima. Maybe one of them are interested to promote Balintawak here in Hong Kong. Because I think they are ready to become future masters just like you Master Obon.”

Master Shifu Wong

(Wing Chun Grand Master -
Master Shi Fu Wong Fighting System)



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From outside the Philippines: (8851) 63 (092) 120-0365

School Submission

The schools listed teach Filipino martial arts, either as the main curriculum or an added curriculum.

If you have a school that teaches Filipino martial arts, or you are an instructor that teaches, but does not have a school, list the school or style so individuals who wish to experience, learn and gain knowledge have the opportunity.

Be Professional; keep your contact information current. - **Click Here**



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Finished manuscripts should be accompanied by color or black and white photographs. Though we take care of materials, we can not be responsible for manuscripts/photographs and accept no liability for same. Every photograph or graphic must be accompanied by a caption Carefully key photos to caption information with a letter or number.

We reserve the right to use any photo(s) as cover material or additional compensation. We also reserve the right to edit material and to crop photographs.

We reserve the right to use articles or parts of articles that are given and approved from time to time as needed to promote the Filipino martial arts and the Culture of the Philippines.

Physical manuscripts should be typed in black, double spaced, and set to 1-1/2 margins (right and left).

Emailed manuscripts should be typed in Ariel or Times Roman, on programs such as Notepad, Wordpad, Microsoft Word, Word Perfect and can be sent as an attachment. Photo(s) can be sent as a .jpg, .gif, .bmp, or .tiff to **Article@fmainformative.info**

We welcome your article, ideas and suggestions, and look forward to working with you in the future.