

Filipino Martial Arts

Digest

Dedicated to the Filipino Martial Arts and the Culture of the Philippines

Special Edition
2010

FMA Corner with Perry Gil S. Mallari



The Manila Times

FMA Digest

Publisher

Steven K. Dowd

FMA Digest Representatives

Marc Lawrence

Contributors

Perry Gil S. Mallari

FMA Pulse Archives

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Publishers Desk

Kumusta

The FMA Digest and the FMA Pulse have been working together to educate and serve as a resource for the current and new generations of Filipino martial arts enthusiasts. When the FMA Pulse began they obtained the services of Perry Gil S. Mallari a professional journalist who has a column “Martial Talk,” published every Sunday in the Manila Times and is the only column about martial arts published in a national broadsheet in the Philippines. He was also a regular writer of the Rapid Journal, the country’s only martial arts magazine for the past 11-years. His articles on the Filipino martial arts are a weekly feature of FMA Pulse, a US-based website aiming to unify the global Filipino martial arts community.

In this Special Edition are some of the articles by Mr. Mallari so you the reader can experience some of his researched writings and see that this is a writer / practitioner that has the desire, ambition and heart of a dedicated Filipino martial arts enthusiast that not only seeks knowledge, trains in the arts, but promulgates and promotes the Filipino martial arts, history, and the Philippine Culture.

Visit the FMA Pulse (www.fmapulse.com) to read more articles that Perry Gil S. Mallari has written and continue to visit, for Mr. Perry continuously submits articles.

Become a member and be notified so to stay up-to-date with current Filipino martial arts events, news, and of course when Mr. Perry’s articles become available.

The FMA Pulse is the new wave of keeping current with the Filipino martial arts.

Maraming Salamat Po

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

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

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

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FMA Digest 1297 Eider Circle Fallon, NV 89406

(775) 423-3253

comments@fmadigest.com

My Life as a Writer

By Perry Gil S. Mallari



Looking back at my life, I now believe that I was destined to become a writer. I had an early affinity for words. Long before I learned to read, I remember asking my mother everyday to read for me magazines and comic books or whatever writing materials were around. The smell of printing ink on the crisp pages excites me.

I first finished reading a book from cover to cover when I was about seven, shortly after I learned to read. It was a book about the Philippines' National Hero Dr. Jose Rizal.

Since I began training in martial arts, I always had this yearning inside me to convey in words the complexities of martial arts practice and principles.

One may notice that pragmatism is a constant element in my martial arts writings. This may stem from an early childhood experience. I grew up near a bunker of butchers and on one occasion had witnessed the bloody havoc that ensued from a liquor fuelled knife fight. Long before I

studied the knife as a weapon of the Filipino martial arts (FMA), I have seen what it can do and its violence has lost its glamour.

Bruce Lee also has a tremendous influence in my life. Lee at one point in time realized that the best way to propagate his philosophy and vision of martial arts was not through teaching in a classroom setting but through the medium of film. I feel the same with my writings. I could have pursued teaching martial arts a long time ago but I didn't push through believing that there were already more than enough good martial arts teachers around. Like Lee, I realized that my ideas could reach more people through writing good martial arts articles. I like the comment of Daniel Go, the publisher and editor of Rapid Journal on the matter, he said, "There are a lot of good practitioners around but there's a dearth of martial artists who can write well about their martial arts."

It was Rapid Journal that published my first full-length martial arts article in 1998. More submissions followed that first story and I became a regular contributor and columnist of the journal for the next 11-years. It was also during this period that I began writing professionally for a number of magazines.

But it was in 2005 when I joined the Manila Times, the Philippines oldest newspaper that my martial arts writings penetrated the mainstream media. Initially, I wrote martial arts stories for its sister publication HealthNews Magazine and eventually for the

newspaper itself. My column, "Martial Talk," was born in March 2008. From then until now, it is the only martial art column published in a national newspaper in the Philippines. I am very grateful to my editors in the Times for always being supportive of my martial arts reporting. When the Arnis Bill was finally enacted into a law, The Manila Times' coverage on the subject was unmatched. My exclusive interview with Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri, the author of the Arnis Law runs three pages including the whole front page of the paper. I believe it was the first time that arnis received such a treatment from a national daily in my country and elsewhere.



In 2009, another important landmark in my writing career happened when I joined fmapulse.com, a website aiming to unify the global Filipino martial arts community. I was awed by the passion of its owners Romeo Maguigad and Michael Quirubin to elevate the Filipino martial arts into same level that other Asian martial arts



like judo and karate are enjoying. I was brimming with excitement with the fact that fmapulse.com is now one of the most frequented sites of Filipino martial arts aficionados worldwide. Through my weekly column FMA Corner on fmapulse.com, I was able to share my research on the Filipino martial arts to a global audience.

The year 2010 marks my 12th year as a professional writer. I was amazed that during this period, I have literally churned out thousands of articles on various topics for print and online media. I am currently in the process of writing my very first book - this, I believe is the next logical step in my career. Yes, it is about martial arts - the one subject closest to my heart.

Perry Gil S. Mallari has been a practitioner and researcher of the Filipino martial arts for the last two decades. His single stick method of escrima bears the stamp of approval of Ignacio Mabait an old-school escrimador who was also a former eight-rounder boxer. Manong Ignacio, a product of the juego todo (all-out stick fighting matches) era, has employed his Escrima while fighting the Japanese in Manila during World War 2. Realizing the connection of Filipino Escrima and Western fencing, Perry studied the art fencing with the foil in the early 1990s under Socorro Olivan at the then Quezon City Fencing Club ran by Celso Dayrit Jr. Dayrit's father Celso Sr. is the father of sports fencing in the Philippines. Perry considers himself primarily a largo mano (long hand or long range) fighter because of the influence of his Western fencing training. Perry also practices hilot, the Filipino healing art of bone setting and therapeutic massage.

While concentrating on the FMA, Perry also cross-trains in other martial arts whenever his schedule permits. Perry believes that the principle of body mechanics is the uniting factor of all martial arts.



Aeta Archery: An Original Filipino Martial Art

The Aetas (also called Agtas) of the mountainous part of northern Luzon, Philippines belong to the “Negrito” group of people that was believed to be the first to inhabit the country when the land bridges in Asia still exist. In terms of physical features, the Aetas are dark skinned; short in stature and with a curly hair and dark round eyes.

Compared to other indigenous people groups in Luzon, like the headhunting tribes of the Ilongots, the Aetas are docile. They originally lived as foragers moving from one place to another in search for food. While the Aetas are highly skilled in the use of the spear and the bow and arrow, they use it mainly for hunting games and rarely for warfare.

If chronology would be the sole basis, then it could be said that Aeta archery was the original Filipino martial art.

Junior Soria, a 23-year old Aeta man I interviewed narrated that the skill in the use of the bow and arrow is something that is part and parcel of an Aeta



Aeta elder Pepito Tanglao

child’s education. Hailing from the mountains of Zambales, Soria himself learned the skill from his grandfather and describes his ability to use the weapon as second nature. He declared that it is now their turn to pass the skill to the younger generation.

Soria said that their typical target practice with a bow and arrow starts at a distance of 10-meters then gradually progressed

to 15-meters as the skill of the archer improves. Soria related that they usually shoot at banana trees during practice. The soft exterior of the banana tree allowed them to extract the arrow easily and also prevents rapid wear-and-tear of the arrowhead from repeated use.

The Aeta man revealed the materials they used to make a bow and arrow. He said that Aeta bows, which in archery jargon are classified as a straight-limb bow, were commonly made of thin planks from the core of the anahaw palm tree (The anahaw palm tree is the same source of the bahi fighting stick). They used “baging” [wild vines] from the jungle for the string of the bow, a reed called “uyong” for the shaft of the arrow and feathers of wild birds for the fletching. Because of its abundance in the lowlands, common nails were just hammered flat and filed into shape to make arrowheads.

I’ve seen a wide variety of arrows used by the Aetas of Zambales - some have simple points while others have elaborately barbed points. I even saw a three-pronged arrow used for shooting certain kinds of birds. Soria pointed out that it is essential to know what kind of arrow would bring down a certain animal. He said that most games go down with one arrow while certain kinds require another shot.

I’ve have witnessed Aeta archers shoot their arrows at a target, reload another arrow while running and shoot again with impressive accuracy.

While highly skilled at shooting animals, they would rarely use their weapons against a fellow human being. The Aetas’



The writer receiving instruction from Aeta archer Junior Soria on how to use the bow and arrow

pacifist nature was evident in some of their techniques in the use of the bow and arrow. Pepito Tanglao, an older Aeta man, demonstrated to me a method of pulling the string of the bow and releasing it without an arrow, a move, which he emphasized, is just meant to scare an enemy.

| Soria narrated that they perform a special ritual before they go hunting. This may consists of a dance and prayer offered to Apo Namalyari, the deity of Mt. Pinatubo volcano. A hunting expedi-

tion usually lasts three days. Aetas commonly hunt for wild boars, deer and certain wild birds. Traditionally, they barter these goods with the products of the lowlanders.

While I mentioned the docile characteristic of the Aetas at the beginning of this article, these indigenous peoples indeed engaged in warfare in certain phases of Philippine history. A number of historical works significantly mentioned the role of the Aetas in the fight against the Japanese in

diers with their bows and arrows.” De Jesus, in the same work also narrated how Aeta archers served as lookouts in various gatherings of the resistance forces during the war, it reads. “Negrito bowmen led by Pam Melicia provided security during these delicate meetings.”



An Aeta dance

Luzon during World War II. One book, “On A Mountain-side: The 155th Provisional Guerrilla Battalion Against the Japanese on Luzon,” by Malcolm Decker, describes how the Negritos of Luzon helped

the American forces in driving out the invaders. The book was based

on the accounts of Malcolm’s father Doyle who had served as an American soldier in the Philippines during the war.

On the heroic exploits of the Aetas during the Japanese occupation, Filipino writer Ramon de Jesus penned the following words in “World War II in Zambales:” “Only seven Japanese soldiers escaped from the attack. A few days after the massacre, a Japanese punitive force was sent to avenge the death of their comrades. When the Japanese force was passing through Poonbato on its way to Sitio Villar, Negrito guerrillas killed 30 of the Japanese sol-



Aeta archers aiming at a target

Symbolism in Pre-Colonial Filipino Warrior Culture

Symbolism is part and parcel of pre-colonial Filipino warrior culture. A certain clothing, tattoo or cicatrix may connote the wearer's status in the warrior society.

Tattooing was widely practiced in pre-colonial Philippines both for the purposes of ornamentation and rite of passage. This was particularly prevalent in the Visayas and among the highland tribes of northern Luzon. So widespread was the practice of tattooing in the Visayas that the Spaniards coined the Visayans "pintados" [painted] because their bodies were covered with tattoos. Batuk is the general term for tattoos in the Visayas. Even today, an annual feast called Pintados Festival is celebrated in Tacloban to pay tribute to the ancient tattooing tradition of the Visayans. On the other hand, in the mountainous part of northern Luzon, tattooing traditions are still preserved today within certain tribes.

The Visayas

William Henry Scott, in his book "Barangay: Sixteenth Century Philippine Culture," explains that the display of tattoos plays an important part in psyching up one's opponent in battle, he wrote, "Still more rugged were those who submitted to facial tattooing. Indeed those with tattoos right up to the eyelids constituted a Spartan elite. Such countenances were really terrifying and no doubt intimidated enemies in battle as well as town mates at home. Men would be slow to challenge or antagonize a tough with such visible signs of physical fortitude."

The location of a tattoo also indicates a warrior's experi-

ence in battle as Scott notes in the following texts, "Chest tattoos which looked like breastplates - less frequently, tattoos on the abdomen - only came after further action in battle; and still later, those on the whole back, widest field for the tattooer's artistry. Facial tattoos from ear to chin to eye were restricted to the boldest and toughest warriors."

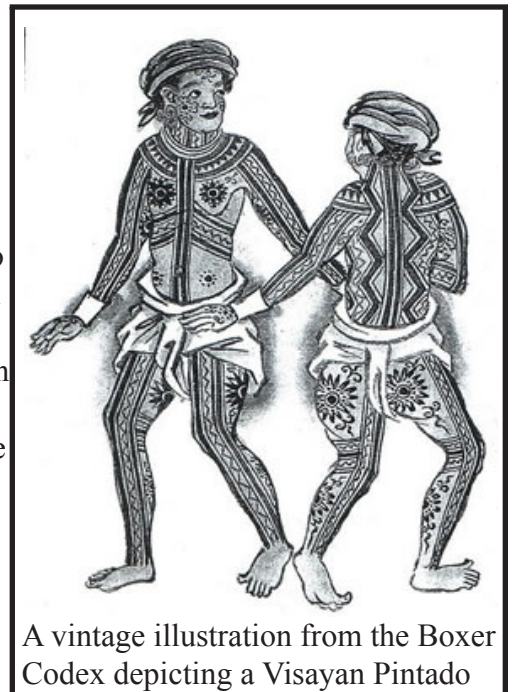
Just like in modern times, tattoo works then were done by skillful artists who charge for their services. The process is pretty much unchanged over the centuries, which include the tracing of the design on the body, pricking it with needles then rubbing soot into the fresh wound. The process is very painful, which is why some men though qualified as warriors avoid the operation for as long as possible until shamed into it. On this, Scott comments, "The operation was not performed all in one sitting but in installments, but even so, often cause a high fever and occasionally infection and death. Baug or binogok was the healing period when the wounds was still swollen, and if infection caused the designs to be muddled, they were called just that - mud (lusak)."

In addition to tattoos, battle-hardened warriors were also known to burn decorative scars on their bodies.

Scott names a few common patterns of tattoos of pre-colonial Filipinos, he says, "Labid were the distinctive inch-wide lines, both the straight ones and those which, in Father Sánchez's (1617, 283) words, "go snaking or zigzagging up the leg to the waist." Ablay were those on the shoulder; dub-

dub, those on the chest up to the throat; and daya-daya - or tagur in Panay - on the arms, Bangut (a muzzle or halter) were the ones that made of the face such a frightening mask, also called "gaping" like a crocodile's jaws or the beak of a bird of prey. Hinawak - from hawak, a tight, lean waist - were men tattooed below the waist, and lipong were heroes tattooed all over (except under the G-string) like the fancy linipong porcelain from China."

Besides tattoos, certain elements of clothing of pre-colonial Filipinos connote an individual's warrior status. A red pudong [head-dress] called magalong for instance was donned by those who have already killed an enemy in battle. The most coveted kind of pudong in the Visayas was made of pinayusan, thin abaca fibers tie-dyed and polished to a silky shine. This kind of headdress was reserved only for a valiant few.



A vintage illustration from the Boxer Codex depicting a Visayan Pintado

The Cordilleras

Analyn Ikin V. Salvador-Amores, a teacher of Social Anthropology and Political Science at the College of Social Sciences, University of the Philippines Baguio published a scholarly paper titled "Batek: Traditional Tattoos and Identities in Contemporary Kalinga, North Luzon Philippines." Her report, which was presented to the 17th International Conference of Association of Historians in Asia at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2002, tackles in details the connection between tattooing and warrior culture in certain highland tribes of northern Luzon.

A tattoo artist in the Cordilleras is called "manbatek." Two instruments were used in the process, the "pat-ik," a light stick that is used for tapping the "gisi," which is the tattoo instrument that holds

the needles. Among the Bontoc, Ifugao and Kalinga tribes of the Cordillera, the ritual of tattooing is closely associated with headhunting. The term for warrior in the Cordilleras is "mai'ngor."

Explaining the symbolism of Kalinga tattoos, a part of Amores' paper reads, "Tattooing starts at the back of the hand and the wrists. The first kill is denoted with stripe patterns which appear like tie band called gulot, or pinupungol. The term munggolot refers to the chief of the headhunting raid and literally means the "cutter of the head" (Billiet and Lambrecht 31), so when the gulot tattoo is earned, this means that the person has killed someone or has become a "headtaker." Those who have killed two individuals have tattoo patterns on their hands. Warriors who have killed ten or more are

the individuals who are permitted to wear the chest tattoos and other elaborate insignias (like the head axe) at the side of their stomach, back, thighs and legs and even the cheeks to connote unrivalled bravery of a warrior in a certain village (warrior status as mai'ngor or mu'urmut)."

The advent of Catholicism in the Philippines vanished the traditions of tattooing to a large degree.

The practice of tattooing survived among Escrimadores during and after colonial period, this time though tattoos were often Latin prayers for protection in battle. Two Filipino martial arts legends, uncle and nephew Regino and Antonio Illustrisimo both have tattoos of oraciones [magical prayers] on their bodies. Regino had one on his leg while Antonio on his chest.

Esoteric Arnis

There are many classifications of Arnis; the better-known categories are Arnis matador (combat Arnis), Arnis entablado (theatrical Arnis), Arnis jugado (sport Arnis) and Arnis guerrero (warrior Arnis). The late Filipino martial arts scholar Pedro Reyes stated however that there is one more type of Arnis unknown to many. In an article titled *Filipino Martial Tradition*, he wrote, “At the same time, a branch of Arnis that so many aspire to learn but only a handful can master became Christianized. I refer to esoteric Arnis, which deals with healing and the use of oracion” or magical prayers (Rapid Journal, Vol. 4 No.1).

In another article he wrote titled “Echoing the Energy’s Equation,” (Rapid Journal Vol.3 No. 2), Reyes recalled his personal experience with esoteric Arnis through the person of the late Antonio Illustrisimo, “At one time I went to the Rizal Park to discuss some business with Gran Maestro Antonio “Tatang” Illustrisimo even though I had a bad cold (flu). During a pause in our conversation, I mentioned the misery the cold was causing me. The old master fell silent. Then a bolt of energy jolted me as it entered between my shoulder blades, sped down my spine and spread throughout my body. By the time I left the park my knees had stopped aching, my fever was down, and I was coughing only occasionally. I never had to go to bed. He aborted the flu by silently reciting an oracion.”

Reyes wrote that based on the classifications made by American psychologist Dr. Lawrence LeShan of paranormal healing, the kind of healing elicited by eso-

teric arnis was classified as Type 5 healing. “In Type 5 healing, he [the practitioner] unites with the universe, but remains aware that he is a part of the universe, different from other parts, though still united,” he explained. Reyes pointed out that such an equation where the practitioner can still “differentiate himself while remaining united,” allowed him to summon the power of the universe to heal the patient. “Note that it is not the healer who heals, it is the universe,” he emphasized.

While Reyes discourse may sound vaguely esoteric, it has obvious parallels with the findings of Quantum physics. Physicist Fred Alan Wolf said that new discoveries in Quantum physics point to the direction connoting that the universe couldn’t exist without the mind entering into it, that the mind actually creates the very thing that is being perceived. To this exciting development Wolf also stated, “We’re really now moving in to a new era, it’s the era where the last frontier is not space as ‘Star Trek’ would say but it’s going to be the mind.”

The origins of esoteric arnis that Reyes mentioned in his writings could be traced to the babaylan traditions of pre-Hispanic Philippines. A babaylan is a spiritual leader possessing the ability to heal and to foresee the future. A male or a female could perform the function though the majority of the babaylans before the coming of the Spaniards were women. The babaylan is also a wisdom-keeper and philosopher of the community and was highly esteemed in pre-Hispanic Filipino societies. The babaylan traditions were abolished

upon the onset of European and American colonialism in the country.

On this transition Reyes wrote, “In many cases, the changes were not too traumatic. For example, the Arnisadores simply moved the great days of initiation into the oraciones of the Mood Goddess to the days of the Lent and to All Souls Day. As for the celebration of the Earth God – Christmas became one of them, leaving only the summer initiations without Christian equivalents. Incidentally, Arnisadores prefer to offer themselves to the Goddess. A traditional practice, for example, is to drill during the nights of the moon to seek the favor, protection and strength of the Great Mother.”

While their function in the community was basically spiritual, a number of babaylans participated in various uprisings. Two known babaylans, Ponciano Elofre, also known as Dios Buhawi (God of the Whirlwind) and Dionisio Seguela (or Dionisio Papa y Barlucia), also called Papa Isio (Isio the Pope) incited and participated in a politico-religious revolt in Negros in the late 19th century against the Spaniards.

A former cabeza de barangay, Elofre’s 1887 revolt was grounded on two issues: forced payment of taxes and religious freedom. He revived the ancient rites of the babaylans resulting to his group, which numbered around 2,000 to be called “Babaylanes.” Elofre died in the town of Siaton in 1888 after an encounter with the Spaniards.

Seguela, meanwhile rose from the ranks of a remnant group of Babaylanes after Elofre’s death.

He combined the issues of religious freedom, agrarian reform and nationalism in his revolution. It took a long time before he gave up his struggle. While General Miguel Malvar, arguably the last leader of the Philippine Revolution to surrender to the Americans gave up the fight on April 16, 1902; Seguela lay down his arms only on August 6, 1907. The Americans sentenced him to death but the punishment was later reduced to life imprisonment. Seguela died in the Old Bilibid Prison in Manila in 1911.



Today, not so many Arnisadores are keen on pursuing the knowledge of esoteric Arnis for the reason that some facets of its teachings run against the grain of their Catholic or Protestant faiths.

Ancient Filipino Sea Warfare

Being an archipelago, the Philippines from the very beginning is a seafaring nation. The pre-colonial socio-political unit of the Filipinos called “barangay” derived its name from “balangay,” an ancient watercraft. Besides transporting people and cargo, the balangay was extensively used for raiding purposes.

Art Valdez, the expedition leader of the “Voyage of the Balangay,” a project launched early this year aiming to sail the world using a reconstructed version of the ancient balangay gave some historical insights on the maritime prowess of the old Filipinos, he said, “What these early Spanish chroniclers saw were islands bustling with activity with its own farming and metallurgy. They saw our seas gleaming with crafts with our ancestors using the oceans as their natural highways. They reported of ships with 100 rower’s just on one side. And the incredible thing is they even wrote that some of the natives already knew how to speak some Spanish and Latin.” On the latter, he hypothesized that the early Filipino sailors could have already reached the Mediterranean where they learned those languages long before the Spaniards came. “Take note that the guide of Ferdinand Magellan named Enrique de Malacca was believed to be a Filipino.”

Valdez even explained how the Filipino sailors of yore travel safely from one island to another, “Our ancestors were one with nature and very sensitive of its changes. When doing inter-island travel they’d just basically hugged the coastline and rowed ashore at the slightest sign of trouble.” He

told me of an ancient mariner technology still used in Tawi-Tawi, Mindanao, “They use this special kind of wood. When it perspires, rain surely follows three days later,” he attested.

The Filipino’s skill in sea warfare had become the constant pain in the neck of the Spaniards when they first came to the country. In Victor Hurley’s book “Swish of the Kris,” an account of a Spanish friar named Padre Crevas reads, “The Southern Filipino ships were faster and swifter than the European ships of that period and they enjoyed the supremacy of the seas until 1860 when the steam vessels arrived on the scene.”

Impressed by the seafaring and boat making skills of the Filipinos, the Spaniards later on employed natives in building the karakoa (also spelled caracao) fleet, which were fitted against the marauding Moros of Mindanao. William Henry Scott, in his excellent book “Barangay: Sixteenth Century Philippine Culture,” describes the prestige of this ancient vessel, “But karakoa cruisers were not designed simply for falling on undefended coastal communities: they were fitted with elevated fighting decks for ship prowess and were entitled to wear distinctive attire.”

The Moro raids on coastal communities may have affected the evolution of the Filipino martial arts in certain regions of the Philippines. Filipino martial arts writer Celestino Macachor theorized that the high level of development of *escrima* in Cebu is the result of the frequent raids of



A karakoa portrayed in a Philippine stamp

the Moros in the area. The Cebuanos then, having to contend with Muslim raids on a regular basis have no choice but to beef up their fighting skills.

But while sea raids were always associated with the Moros of Mindanao, Scott wrote that it was also widely practiced by Visayans, another part of his book says, “The most celebrated form of Visayan warfare was sea raiding, *man-gayaw*, a word which appeared in all major languages in the Philippines. Its root appears to be *kayaw* (for example, Ilocano *kinayawan*, captive) though Spanish lexicographers extracted *ayaw*, *ngayaw*, and *agaw*, and it meant a raid to bring back slaves or heads. There is no record of Visayan headhunting - that is, warfare for the specific purpose of taking heads - but heads were cut off in the course of battle or murder. Pedro de Arana lost his head during the occupation of Cebu. *Luba*, *pagot*, *sumbali*, and *tongol* all meant to behead, and *tongol* was also the dress plumage displayed at the stern of a warship.”

Scott even wrote of a ritual the Visayans conduct before a sea raid, “The sacrifice that was performed on launching a warship for a raid was called *pagdaga*, and it was considered most effective if the prow and keel were smeared

with blood of a victim from the target community.”

Projectiles were obviously the weapons of choice of pre-colonial Filipinos when it comes to ship-to-ship fighting. In the Battle of Bangkusay on June 3, 1571, the fleet of 40 war boats under the leadership of the king of Macabebe was equipped with a cannon each.

Scott narrates the details

of the projectile weapons inside a karakoa, “Normal for open combat were bamboo spears with fire-hardened wooden points, their last section loaded with sand for better balance, or, most common of all, the sugob, a length of sharpened bagakay bamboo. From the fighting decks of karakoa cruisers, 30-centimeter long spikes or javelins

of heavy hardwood pointed at both ends were thrown in large numbers with an accuracy which attracted the attention of all foreign observers. All these missiles were ordinarily poisoned with bulit, snake venom, preferably from a viper so deadly it was called odto, high noon, because its victims could not expect to survive more than half a day.”

The Fighting Prowess of the Iranun and Balangingi Pirates

of Mindanao

It was the Filipino martial arts researcher and writer Celestino Macachor who postulated that the high level of development of Cebuano Eskrima could be attributed to the frequent maritime raids conducted by Muslim pirates in the area. A practitioner of Eskrima De Campo-JDCIO, Macachor is the writer of the article “New Theories on the Origins of Eskrima” published in the *Rapid Journal* and Ned Nepangue’s co-author of the book “Cebuano Eskrima: Beyond the Myth.” A part of Macachor’s article reads, “The Province of Cebu stretching from Bantayan Islands in the North to Santander in the South became the focal point in the development of Eskrima and that its development and tactical use outlived the Moro raiders.”

Macachor’s theory of piratical raids affecting the development of Eskrima is sound considering the nature of Iranun (also known as “Ilanun) pirates that sowed terror in the seas of Southeast Asia centuries ago. The Iranuns that originally hailed around Lake Lanao in southern Mindanao was once considered the fiercest pirates in the Malay world. Almost always mentioned next to the Iranuns are the Samal Balangingi, an ethnic group in Sulu-Mindanao region that were known for state-sanctioned maritime raiding. These marauders possessed combat skills of the highest caliber and defenders of the communities they were attacking must be armed with equal fighting prowess to stop them.

While Macachor’s treatise

is focused mainly on the Visayan region, the fact is coastal communities all over to Philippines and Southeast Asia were once targets of Iranun maritime raids. The influence of these raids extended beyond the development of combative skills of the settlers of a threatened area. During the 1830s, houses in Zamboanga were built on posts with ladders that can be taken up at night as precautions against Iranun and Balangingi raids.

The fearsome portrait of these pirates were vividly captured in Francis James Warren’s book “Iranun and Balangingi: Globalization, Maritime Raiding and the Birth of Ethnicity.” On the hierarchy in a pirate ship and the fighting prowess of these men he wrote, “In addition to the ordinary crew and oarsmen, every joanga [a raiding vessel] carried a large force of armed fighting men trained to serve on land or sea between 60 and 80 on the larger vessels. These warriors, renowned for their martial skill, discipline and courage, played no part in sailing the long ships and complement carried on board was there simply to wage war on land and sea. The exception to this rule was the Iban and Alforean warriors whose extraordinary stamina made them ideal candidates to pull at the sweeps in an emergency. These fighting men were armed with shields, spears, two-handed lanun swords, axes, and muskets, and pistols. Standing on the raised upper deck or fighting platform, 40 or 50 of these screaming warriors, dressed in bullet-proof, sleeveless

scarlet jackets padded with kapok, or wearing various pieces of armor and chain mail, made a terrifying sight as their joanga swept alongside a merchant prahu or descended upon a hapless village.”

As previously mentioned, the scope of Iranun maritime raids was extensive. On the range of operations and business savvy of the Iranuns, Warren wrote, “The Iranun warriors, like the Vikings, were worldly raiders who traveled in search of slaves and work, sometimes for years on end, around the great ports of Manila, Makassar, Batavia, Penang, and Singapore. They often spoke a variety of languages, and were familiar with the traditions and religions of all quarters of Southeast Asia. Some were literate, able to negotiate ransom, or unravel the intricacy of colonial legal system and they were knowledgeable in



An Iranun pirate

martial arts, weapons manufacture and seamanship.”

Besides knives, swords, spears, axes, guns and cannons, one interesting weapon that these pirates were adept in using were common stones, “When attacking walls the Iranun and Balangingi frequently made use of stones which they threw with great skill and accuracy,” Warren notes.

While fond of swords particularly the *kampilan* (often decorated with human hair), the Iranuns and Balangingis were also skilled in the use of the gun, which during that time were the most modern hand-held weapon. On these pirates’ preference on firearms Warren wrote, “Firearms were traded widely to the Iranun and Balangingi because they had no means of manufacturing them on a large scale. The type of firearms the maritime raiders preferred were those suited for shipboard use that could be concealed, cocked and fired at close range – especially when boarding another vessel. Flintlock pistols and standard issue

short firearms such as muskets and musketoons with brass and wood fittings were ideally suited for use by Iranun and Samal sharpshooters on board the *joanga* and *garay*.”

Another interesting topic that Warren discussed in his book was the existence of alternate peaceful economic pursuits of some of the pirates. Published in Warren’s book is a statement of Tala Goa, a pirate who was placed in charge of one of the vessels of a Balangingi squadron in 1830. His testimony to the judge who had sentenced him to life imprisonment, reads, “I live at Ballangninhin with my family. My occupation is diverse, occasionally mangoorap [slave raiding] at other times making salt, planting paddy, collecting tortoise shell etc. I am a follower of Orang Kaya Kullul and I am compelled to do and act as he may direct.” This is worth mentioning because having multiple occupations make the Iranuns and Balangingis difficult to identify and thus more dangerous. They may have appeared as docile

farmers and fishermen one day and as feral marauders the next.

The fighting prowess of the Iranuns and Balangingis could be attributed to the fact that their training began at a very early age, some as young as 10 or 11. The nautical and martial skills of these young boys were honed in the pearl fishery of Sulu and by occasionally joining raids.

Though the reputation of the Iranun and Balangingi depicts them as bloodthirsty savages, Warren noted that these fighting men were bound by sophisticated code of conduct, which he describes with the following words, “These special warriors were bound together by near total loyalty and strict discipline. Their code of conduct meant that there was no place for shame and dishonor and they would never abandon their commander and companions in battle: an Iranun warrior never expected any quarter particularly from Europeans and hence were prepared to follow their commander to his death if called upon to do so.”

The Talibong-wielding Pulahanes of Samar

The Pulahan (literally “those wearing red”) is a controversial organization developed in the Visayas before the Philippine Revolution. Its members called “Pulahanes” numbered around 10,000-15,000 during the peak of the movement. The Pulahanes who wear red trousers during raids (hence the name) were known for their use of the anting-anting [an object with magical powers] and their feral boldness in battle. The group practiced its own brand of religion, which is a fusion of ancient babaylan [indigenous native religious leader] traditions and Catholicism. Various historical accounts paint disparate portraits of the group - some portraying the Pulahanes as legitimate revolutionaries, some as bandoleros or bandits and some as mere religious fanatics.

Among the most extensive research done on the Pulahanes was conducted by Professor Daniel Talde of the University of the Philippines Tacloban. His paper titled “Beliefs and Practices of Samareño Pulahanes: A Struggle for Freedom and Self-Rule,” was read during the 21st Philippine National Historical Society National

Conference on Local and National History at the Ateneo de Naga University, Naga City, in 2000. The following words are Talde’s definition of the movement, “The Pulahan is a socio-political millenarian movement composed of ordinary individuals who resided in the interior areas of Samar. They descended from the taong-labas or people who refused to be influenced by the colonizers for they dwelt outside the pueblo centers. The Pulahanes organized the said Samahan [organization] to rival the communities of the pueblo-centers and paved the way for the kind of life they aspired for.”

Weapon of choice

The dreaded weapon of the Pulahanes is the talibong.



A talibong

In his book “Jungle Patrol: The History of the Philippine Constabulary,” Victor Hurley describes the details of the talibong of the Pulahanes, it reads, “The bush opened again after a while, and Crockett [Philippine Constabulary Captain Cary Crockett] came back to the beach. His men were carrying trophies of the chase now; great crescent-shaped blades that were heavily weighted towards the point. The knives were without guards, and the handles were of carabao horn and heavily mounted with silver. The edges were as keen as razors.

These were the talibongs of the hillmen - the great fighting bolos of the fanatical mountaineers.”

Besides using the talibong in war there were accounts of Pulahanes using this blade in duels. Henry F. Funtecha, PhD., in his column “Bridging the Gap” published by Iloilo Views wrote that Pulahan leader Macario Lukso died in a one-on-one fight with a talibong, it says, “Unfortunately, Lukso was killed by Boni Palomar, an equally brave and heroic man in a manly talibong (long sharp fighting bolo) duel.”

Escrima style

One particular system of Filipino martial arts associated with the Pulahanes is the Derobio style of escrima brought to Hawaii by Master Braulio Pedoy during the 1920s. Pedoy was among the masters featured in Dan Inosanto’s classic book “The Filipino Martial arts.” A short entry in the book reads, “Through Master Pedoy I became more aware of the history of the Filipino martial arts and culture, and learn to appreciate his methods of Derobio in escrima.” Derobio, which literally translates, “rhythm of a horse,” is a style that Pedoy said he learned from Faustino Ablen, a renowned leader of the Pulahanes. A testament to Ablen’s fighting skills is the fact that he was among the last of the bandoleros or outlaws as the American colonial government branded revolutionaries at that time, that were captured. Ablen was first arrested for initiating revolt in Leyte against the Spanish authorities in the late 1880s. He escaped captivity. After the Americans took over the country, Ablen and his follow-



Faustino Ablen in captivity

ers continued to fight for independence. Ablen was wounded in the head and captured by the Philippine Constabulary near Dagami, Leyte on June 11, 1907. Carrying the tradition of the group, Pedoy became known in Hawaii as a warrior and healer.

Anting-anting for protection

The Pulahan's name for anting-anting is "hapin" and each man was not allowed to leave the camp without one. Juan Nueva, a Pulahan member of Camp Katagoyngahan that Talde interviewed stated, "We were encouraged to use the oracion any time as a weapon against enemies and as a preparation for any surprise attacks. One should have his own libretta [prayer booklet]. You can either put it in your pocket or you can wrap it with a piece of cloth, sew it and with a piece of string, wear it as a necklace." The Pulahan's literally counted on the power of their hapin for survival. They were not allowed to eat even if an operation would last for days because of the belief that eating would diminish the mystical protection provided by the hapin.

The term for a Pulahan's combat operation is "salida." Talde wrote of a pre-raid ritual by the group. Some of the former Pulahan's and descendants of the group he interviewed revealed that before a salida, the mayor or leader orders his men to unsheathe their bolos for him to lace his saliva on the blades. The ritual was believed to endowed special power on the Pulahan's bolos, which must not be pulled from its scabbard unless an encounter erupted.

The Pulahan's steadfast faith on the power of their anting-anting could explain the group's high casualty in battle. The Pulahan's were known to rush boldly towards a hail of gunfire believing that their anting-anting would make them impervious to bullets.

Talde in his paper notes that the Pulahan's veneration of the two foremost figures of the Philippine Revolution; Jose Rizal and Andres Bonifacio is a clear indication that the group is, "acting not out of banditry but out of a desire to be free."

The Cimarrones of Bicol

"**Cimarron**" in Spanish means untamed or wild. In the Philippines, the term "Cimarrones" pertains to an ethnic minority group inhabiting the mountainous parts of Bicol in the southern tip of Luzon. Living up to their name, the Cimarrones are known as a fierce mountain tribe and their raids on the lowlands were feared during colonial times.

In her book "Conquest and Pestilence in the Early Spanish Philippines," Linda A. Newson wrote of the Spaniards' documentation of the natives of Bicol, it reads, "In the nineteenth century the Franciscan José Castaño classified the inhabitants of Bicol into three "races" on the basis of differ-

ences in their character, language, and culture - Agta, Dumagat, and Cimarron." On the Cimarrones, Newton commented, "The Cimarrones inhabited the slopes of Mount Isarog and forested hills of Siruma and Camaroan. These groups were cultivators and hunters but were most renowned for the raids they conducted on those in the lowlands. As their names suggests, they were probably fugitives from Spanish control, and as such emerged as a distinct group only in colonial times. By the end of the Spanish rule the Negritos and Cimarrones, among whom there was some intermarriage, probably accounted for 1 percent of the region's population."

The part of Newton's statement that intrigued me most is the part saying that the Cimarrones could be "fugitives from Spanish control." If that was the case, then there is a probability that the Cimarrones were once subjugated by the Spaniards and may have absorbed some influence from the latter.

The Cimarrones were labeled as bandits during colonial times. Accounts abound that the raids conducted by this tribe caused terror and displacements among lowland communities. Greg Bankoff, author of "Crime, Society, and the State in the Nineteenth-Century Philippines," wrote of the existence of brigandage in

the stronghold of the Cimarrones, it says, “Whatever the claims of its governor, however, banditry did exist in Camarines Sur. It may not have been prevalent among the settled lowland communities of the central valley, but it was definitely a problem in the eastern Bicol Cordillera.”

Bicolano Blade

One bladed weapon unique to Bicol and often identified with the Cimarrones is the “minasbad.” Like the bolo of the Tagalog region, the minasbad has a dual purpose of being a weapon and a farm tool. The main features that distinguish the minasbad from other Philippine blades are its handle with an ornate animal figurehead often made of carabao horn and its wooden scabbard with exquisite engravings. A graceful curve and a flat to rounded tip characterize the minasbad blade. The latter is an indication that the blade was also used for agricultural chores. Other minute attributes of the minasbad are the serrations near the base of its blade and an attachment of a tassel of hair on its sheath (presumably meant to wipe off the blood from the blade).

One important observation I made on the minasbad is that some of its variations have a hand guard similar to that of a western saber, an uncommon element on a Filipino blade. Again, remembering Newton’s comment on the possibility of the Cimarrones being “fugitives from Spanish control,” it is easy to postulate that this element was borrowed from the Spaniards.

The craft of forging minasbads is still preserved in the Bicol region today.

Style of Arnis

In 1999, Dionisio de Lima and the late Filipino martial arts scholar Pedro Reyes published an article in the Rapid Journal documenting a style of Arnis that was said to have originated from the Cimarrones. Titled “Cimarron Arnis,” a portion of the story reads, “The Cimarrones have a fascinating custom of passing to one another a chew of betel nuts and leaves on the tips of their bolos. Woe to the man who allows the chew to fall. A fight to the death could ensue then and there. For that reason, only a few lowlanders have learned the arnis of the Cimarrones. Among those few is Maestro Rodolfo Ilano, or Ka Ompong among his intimates. Now in his sixties, he is a healing maestro as well. He taught when he was younger. Now he lives in retirement in the hills of Bicol, having lost all desire to teach.”

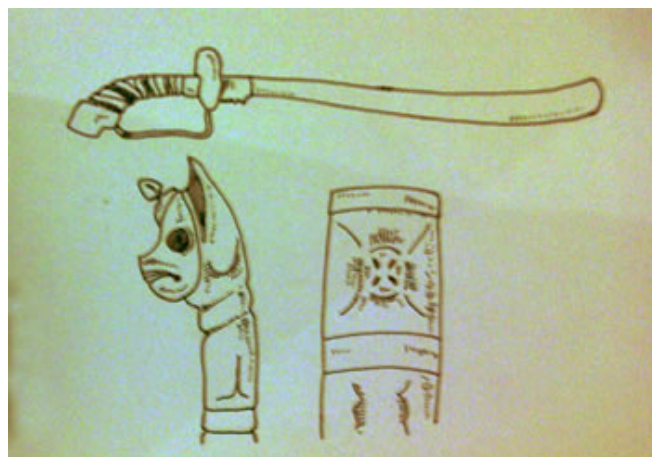
Being De Lima’s relative, Ilano granted the interview. For the Rapid article, he demonstrated the empty-hand aspect of Cimarron arnis. Ilano named some important principles for barehanded fighting, which includes trying to get on the side or at the back of your opponent, wrenching his arms into awkward positions and the use of the fingers to dig into vulnerable spots.

Underscoring the ferocity of the character of Cimarron Arnis, the two authors concluded, “Ka Ompong is an Arnis legend in Southern Luzon.

Unlike many contemporary maestros whose exploits are confined to their gymnasia, he has used his Arnis to save his life in several occasions. He continues to heal. That he no longer desires to teach is a great loss to Arnis.”

Conversion to Catholicism

While many Cimarrones retained their fierce autonomy, some were eventually converted to Catholicism. In an article titled, “Peñafrancia - A Love Story,” Catholic priest Rev. Jess B. Esplana wrote that the Cimarrones were indeed one of the original devotees of the Virgin of Peñafrancia. A part of his article reads, “Why fluvial, by water! One, because most of the devotees coming from neighboring towns, provinces, used “bancas” (small paddled boats) as their means of transportation and offered to tow the Virgin’s boat (Pagoda) back to her Shrine. Two because the “cimarrones” (mountain people branded by the Spanish as “rebels”) who were the original devotees of the Ina [mother] were afraid to come near the seat of the Spanish government for fear of being arrested.”



An illustration of the minasbad with its distinct ornate animal figurehead and sheath with detailed engravings

The Warrior Tribe of the Bagobos

I first got interested in Bagobo warrior culture after interviewing Master Yuli Romo, a senior student of the late Grandmaster Antonio “Tatang” Illustrisimo in 2003. Prior to our meeting, I have seen Romo in pictures wearing a Bagobo costume. Of all the Filipino martial arts masters I have met, Romo has the most distinct aura of ethnicity. During the interview, he demonstrated a Bagobo salutation wherein the sword is held at the back.

Warrior tribe

The Bagobos are one of the non-Muslim ethnic minority groups in Mindanao originally inhabiting the west coast of Davao. Similar to Muslim society, the Bagobos of old were divided into datus or the chieftains, freemen, and slaves. They however worshipped spirits called “gimokods” whose knowledge lives in their elders called “mabalians.”

A vivid portrait of the Bagobos, long before many of them converted to Christianity was captured in the book “The Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao” by American anthropologist Fay-Cooper Cole published in 1913.

Cole noted that among the foremost aspirations of Bagobo men was to become warriors, “Young men strived to attain the rank of magani, a warrior class whose members had killed more than one enemy and were entitled to wear distinctive red clothing.”

Cole commented on how strife was born between the Moros and the Bagobos, he wrote, “The friendly relations with the Moro seem to have been broken off upon the arrival and settlement of the

Spaniards in Davao. The newcomers were then at war with the followers of Mohammed and soon succeeded in enlisting the Bagobo rulers in their cause. A Chinese plate decorated with the picture of a large blue fish was offered for each Moro head the tribesmen presented to the Spanish commander. The desire for these trophies was sufficient soon to start a brisk trade in heads, to judge from the number of these plates still to be seen among the prized objects of the petty rulers.”

Either alone or in a group, it is interesting to note the Bagobos’ courage in entering hostile territories to conduct raids. Those aspiring the status of a magani conducted ambushes on passing foes. Raids were also conducted by groups consisting of 60 or more men under the leadership of a magani. The reasons for such raids vary like avenging a death of a fellow tribesman, securing loots and slaves or to get glory and recognition.

During these operations, The Bagobos used an implement of war called “sogiang,” which are sharpened bamboo sticks that were stuck on the ground to wound patrolling or pursuing enemies.

Cole described the cherished trophies of the Bagobo warriors with the following words, “The warriors of Cibolan and Malilla formerly carried heads of enemies to their towns and made use of them during the GinEm ceremony, while at Bansalan and Digos a lock of hair, cut from the head of the slain, answered the same purpose. Individual raiders sometimes carry home a head or a hand as evidence of a successful



Bagobo Chief - A Bagobo chief (Philippine Photographs Digital Archive, Special Collections Library, University of Michigan)

fight, and at such times festivals may be held to celebrate the event. However, the trophy soon loses its value and is hung or buried at a distance from the village. Head-hunting for the sake of the trophy itself, does not exist here.”

Unique armor

Like other tribal groups in the Philippines, the native weapons of the Bagobos are swords and knives for close quarter combat and spears, bows and arrows as well as blowguns for long-range fighting. But what is most unique about the Bagobos is the type of armor they use and how it affected their fighting strategy, on this Cole wrote, “For defense they carry shields, either round or oblong and cover the body with so many strips of hemp cloth that a knife thrust is warded off. Turning his body sideways to the enemy, the warrior crouches behind his shield, keeping up a continuous capering, rushing forward or dancing backward,

seeking for an opening but seldom coming to close quarters. Arrows and spears are glanced off with the shield. An attack is usually initiated by the throwing of spears, then, if the enemy is at a disadvantage or confused, the warriors rush in to close combat. For this purpose they rely entirely on their knives, and as fencers they are unexcelled. They are but indifferent shots with the bow and arrow, and that weapon is but little used in actual combat.

It has been frequently stated that these arrows are poisoned but I was unable to discover a single specimen so prepared.”

Besides hemp, Cole also mentioned two materials commonly found in the Philippines - carabao horn and rattan, which the Bagobos used in constructing armor, “Old warriors state that in former years they not only covered the upper part of the body with hemp cloth but wound over this

long decorated strips called gindua; they also tell of coats of mail made of carabao horn or rattan. None of these outfits exist in the territory today, but it is not at all improbable that they were formerly in use, for the long decorated bands are still found among the Bukidnon of the North, with whom some trade is carried on; and a few coats of mail are to be seen among the neighboring Moro.”

The Characteristics of Traditional Filipino Martial Arts Training

In the olden days, there was no ranking system in Arnis-Escrima - it's either you're a teacher or you're a student. Originally, the art was taught one-on-one and though the very personal approach to teaching meant quality instruction, this resulted to a small number of qualified instructors to proliferate the art. The use of such titles as “master” or “grandmaster” to address an Filipino martial arts teacher is but a later development. In traditional Filipino martial arts setting, “manong” and “ingkong” were mostly used, which are titles for a revered elder.

A part of Dan Inosanto's book “Jeet Kune Do: The Art and Philosophy of Bruce Lee” discussed the teaching credentials in traditional Filipino martial arts, it reads, “As for any type of ranking system, Dan explains: The authority to teach is given by handing down a favorite weapon or pet movement; there are no credentials.”

Inosanto again mentioned

the practice of handing down a favorite weapon from master to student in his book “Absorb What is Useful.” One passage in the book says, “Jack Santos later became an advisor to my academy, and until the time of his death was the oldest living Escrima Master in the United States. On his deathbed, surrounded by a small group of Filipino boys, he asked for his Kris shrouded in green scabbard. His final words were, “Make sure this gets to Dan...”

The use of formal ranking system through the issuance of certificates and colored belts in some styles of Filipino martial arts was mainly introduced during the 1960s and 1970s at the height of popularity of Japanese and Chinese martial arts in the Philippines and around the world. The rationale of Filipino martial arts teachers who have adapted this practice was that it was a necessary move to make. They believe that the act would render the Filipino martial arts more attractive to the public

because it now possesses the semblance of the more popular Japanese and Chinese arts.

The training in traditional Filipino martial arts was very informal too, done while wearing everyday clothes at a location of the master's choosing, which could be his home, his backyard or in an open field. Mark Wiley offers an interesting comment on this subject in his book “Filipino Martial Culture,” it says, “For the Filipino martial arts practitioner, where a physical door or even a room indicating sacred training space is the exception rather than the rule, other “intangible” thresholds exist. In the example of training held in “the Luneta” [the Philippines' national park], coming into the established training time with the master becomes the threshold as it moves the student's mental state from an ordinary person into a martial arts practitioner embarking on a warrior's path.”

Traditional Filipino martial arts masters are also reluctant

to share their skills to people they don't know intimately. To them, their knowledge of the Filipino martial arts is an heirloom, which cannot be bought by money. For a student to be accepted, he must prove himself worthy to be entrusted with such a knowledge deemed sacred.

The late Filipino martial arts scholar Pedro Reyes described the distinct traits of traditional masters, in his article "Filipino Martial Tradition" (Rapid Journal Vol. 4 no.1), he wrote, "When a student first approaches a traditional master, the master may say, 'Yes, I'll teach you the little that I know.' He would then demonstrate his abilities and if the student likes it, he would stay for more instruction."

The above-mentioned reminds me of my encounter with Manong Ignacio Mabait, an old-school Escrimador who is a product of the *juego todo* [all-out stick fighting] era. I chanced upon him one early morning in 2000 while I was out to buy bread for breakfast – he was carrying a pair of rattan Escrima sticks. He answered in the affirmative when I asked him if he was an Escrimador. His reply though polite was brief and succinct and he seemed wary of my intentions for asking. Since our initial meeting, I would spend a couple of minutes of friendly chat with him, whenever I saw him on the street while I'm on my way to work or heading home. It took roughly six months before he opened up about his martial art.

Later on when we became friends, I discovered that he learned his martial art from his father. He plainly called it "Escrima." His father, he intimated, fought against the Spaniards and

consecutively against the Americans. Manong Ignacio himself fought against the Japanese in Manila during World War II. Also a former eight-rounder boxer, he retained much of his strength in his twilight years. He was 84-years old when I met him but nevertheless can still pump one-arm push-ups.

How he shared his brand of Escrima to me was also a unique experience. I'm not quite sure whether it was because he was aware of my past Filipino martial arts training, language barrier or lack of verbal communication skill, but he didn't taught me with the usual "this is angle one... this is angle two..." but rather by demonstrating combative concepts. Each contact of his stick on a surface serves as a springboard to launch an attack on another plane generating an explosive forward pressure. He was already half-blind when I last saw him in 2007 and had totally lost contact with him when I relocated to another residence.

Another unique characteristic of traditional Filipino martial arts training is how one progresses from being a student to becoming a master. In the same article, Reyes explains, "But in that case, when does an Arnis student becomes a Master? Does he promote himself? Strange as it may seem to a Chinese or Japanese stylist, the answer in traditional Arnis is, yes. The traditional Arnisador begins to teach when he feels he is ready to teach, not when his master tells him so." Reyes' explanation could be understood better by examining the old traditions of Arnis-Escrima. In the olden days, a Filipino man does not flaunt his stick or blade fighting skills unless he was ready to be challenged. The decision to teach connotes that he was extremely confident of his fighting skills. The fact that he is willing to step into a death match was also the reason why he commanded respect regardless whether he himself or his teacher elevated him to the status of being a Master.



The writer training with Manong Ignacio Mabait

The Footwork of Arnis-Escrima

No matter how good an Escrimador is in wielding his weapons, it would do little good unless he has the right footwork to bring him to his intended target. There are varied approaches to footwork in the Filipino martial arts but the most commonly used is the triangular footwork.

The triangular footwork stemmed out of the dynamics of the movement of the stick as a weapon. The best diagram to illustrate the triangle footwork is a box with an X inside it (dividing the square into four connected triangles).

The upper diagonal lines resembling a “V” represent directions to take on either the right side or left side of the opponent.

If the opponent is swinging a forehand horizontal strike with a stick from his right to his left, moving forward on the left diagonal stem of the “V” connotes jamming the weapon, stopping it

on its track before it could gain momentum.

On the other hand, moving forward on the right diagonal stem of the “V” would mean flowing with the weapon’s movement until it arrived in a “zero-pressure” zone where it had already lost much of its force.

Moving along the lower diagonal lines resembling an upside-down “V” represents evasion - avoiding damage by staying out of the business end of your opponent’s stick.

Besides the triangle, other approaches to footwork can be found in various styles of Filipino martial arts like the linear footwork similar to western fencing and boxing. There’s even some that incorporated Chinese kung fu footwork as in the case of Lapunti Arnis Abaniko, which is the result of the collaboration between Grandmaster Felimon Caburnay and Grandmaster Johnny Chiuten.

In his article “Lapunti Arnis: The Third Style” (Rapid Journal Vol.5 No.1), Rene Navarro, Chiuten’s friend and student wrote, “Caburnay and Chiuten met in 1972 and combined the existing techniques of Arnis de Abanico - solo baston, doble baston, daga and espada y daga, along with the subsidiary techniques of tapi-tapi, palakaw, arko, contadas and trangkada - and the deceptive footwork and kicking techniques of Hong Cha.” Chiuten was the top student of Lao Kim, the legendary kung fu master of Manila’s

Chinatown during the 1960s.

I personally believe that the practice and choice of footwork would become a highly personal thing in the long run. A number of factors would affect a practitioner’s choice of footwork such as his physique, psyche as a fighter and preferred weapons. Dan Inosanto once told of how he tried to copy the footwork of the late Juanito “Johnny Lacoste with no success. A part of his book the “Filipino Martial Arts,” reads, “Danny Inosanto says he’s been trying to copy LaCoste’s footwork for 14-years. He’s finally gotten to where he can describe it, but actually use it the way LaCoste does? No.”

While some Filipino Masters offer elaborate explanations on the intricacies of the footwork of the Filipino martial arts, some pays scant attention on the subject.

Samuel Chau, a practitioner and coach of Eskrima De Campo-JDCIO under Maestro Ireneo Olavides stated that there’s no fancy footwork in their system. Chau said that De Campo-JDCIO just employs simple small and big steps on both left and right directions, “It is more fitting with the “sniper nature” of our system,” he pointed out. Chau is pertaining to the largo mano (long hand or long range) nature of De Campo Eskrima that employs fast, accurate and rebounding strikes.

Bonifacio “Loloy” Uy, creator of the BDU (Bonifacio D. Uy) System of Escrima even goes farther by stating that, “There’s no footwork in Arnis-Escrima.”

In my own practice, I found that what works for me best



The triangular footwork is the most common footwork in the Filipino martial arts

is the step-and-slide method of footwork. This kind of footwork is accomplished by simply stepping first with the foot nearest to the direction you are taking and then the other foot slides into place. Personally, I've found this method effective in moving in all directions both offensively and defensively. Because the feet always remain at shoulder-width apart, it also doesn't disturb one's center of gravity much during movements.

But remember that no matter how efficient a particular footwork, terrain can impose limitation on its efficacy. It's easy to develop preferences when you are practicing your art in a comfortable set-

ting. A good exercise then is to test how your footwork would work on different environment like on a ledge, the slope of a hill, a slippery floor or while wading in knee-deep waters.

Inosanto in his book "Jeet Kune Do: The Art and Philosophy of Bruce Lee," wrote, "To further illustrate the profound impact environment can have on one's method of fighting, I would only mention that there exists a style of Filipino sword fighting which teaches its practitioners to respond to an encounter by immediately dropping to the ground in a seated posture. Ridiculous, you say? Sure, if the assault takes place

on solid footing, such as a parking lot or a deserted street corner. But there is an unusually heavy rainfall in the region where this style comes from, which leaves the ground so muddy and slippery that after the first stroke the practitioner would invariably slip down anyway."

Unlike other Asian martial arts like karate and kung fu, footwork in traditional Arnis-Escrima can be learned without practicing formalized stances. In many traditional styles of Filipino martial arts, the student is encouraged to discover his optimum stance through body-feel and the understanding of body mechanics.

Power Generation in Filipino Stick Fighting

Power generation is most important when fighting with impact weapons. When fighting with swords and knives, minimal force is needed since it is the blade that inflicts the damage. In contrast, Fighting with a stick means you've got to be able to generate bone-shattering power.

There are roughly two types of strikes in Filipino stick fighting: follow through strikes and snapping strikes. While both required rapid muscular contractions for power generation, the latter is harsher to the joints particularly the elbows and the wrists.

Training of the muscles is crucial to power development in stick fighting. It is pretty well established now that an abundance of fast-twitch muscles is advantageous for martial artists because of the rapid nature and explosiveness of martial arts movements. In simplest term, fast twitch muscles are for sprinters and slow twitch muscles are for distance runners. The dominance of either type of muscles is determined by genetics. While this is the case, some experts believe that it is poor predictor of actual athletic performance. The nature of stick fighting dictates that both muscle types be developed.

The most common method of developing striking power with the stick is through stroking exercises. This simply means that you practice each strike full-force with no target but thin air using a heavy hardwood stick or the stick you would actually use in a real fight. Besides power development, this exercise would result to economical form and would teach

your body to act in a synergistic fashion. While a high number of repetitions is the goal in this exercise, one must progress cautiously to avoid undue strain. The best indicator that you are doing it right is the swishing sound of the stick. Ireneo Olavides, founder of Eskrima De Campo JDC-IO said that his teacher, the late legendary juego todo (all out stick fight) champion Grandmaster Jose D. Caballero puts extra emphasis on this, "In all our sessions, Manong Jose wanted to hear the swishing sound of all the strikes made by the stick, which weighed about 150 grams. He believed that the swishing sound of the stick when striking is a manifestation of power and speed," he narrated.

Hitting solid objects like sandbags, dummies and old tires could augment power stroking.

Olavides believes that relaxation is very important in delivering fast and powerful strikes. I will never forget his insight on the seemingly simple matter of holding the stick, "Being one with the stick means the weapon has become a mere extension of your limb. If you have become one with the stick, then you don't treat it as a slave, gripping it desperately as if it would slip out of your hand any moment," he said. With his prowess in Escrima, I find it a big surprise that unlike a typical martial arts old-timer, he has very smooth hands - almost like those of a woman.

The Escrimadores of yore were known to test the power and snap of their strikes by cracking husked coconuts with their sticks.

The National Geographic Channel through its program Fight Science once aired a special on the Filipino fighting stick featuring Dan Inosanto. In the interview with Fight Science, Inosanto explained the potential of the stick as a weapon, "When you look at the stick it looks very innocent. But this thing can travel like a baseball pitch sometimes at 90 miles an hour," he said. Inosanto explained that the simple motion of the stick could be very deceiving because done full-speed; it could deliver a succession of six blows in one second. He demonstrated that to generate power, one could use just the wrist, then the shoulder, the waist and finally the entire body. Inosanto's demonstration showed that a minor strike (power generated by the wrist) could easily lead to a major strike (power generated by the waist or the whole body). The program's use of sophisticated motion-capture technology also revealed that the stick extends the



Various weights of sticks are employed in power stroking exercises

user's range by nearly three feet in every direction. This advantage is further magnified by the increased leverage that creates a whip-like effect into the target.

While there is yet to be done a study on the kinesiology (science of human movement) of Filipino stick fighting movements, I believe it is worthwhile examine a similar research done on west-

ern fencing and kendo since these martial arts display similar movements. Jonathan Riddle, in his article "Kinesiology of Fencing and Kendo," published in the December 2007 issue of *Iaidō Journal* concludes, "In both systems the power of the attack comes from the force applied to the ground, causing a reaction from the ground into the legs, causing an accelera-

tion of the body and arms towards the target. This would be important especially if an actually sharp weapon were either cutting flesh or penetrating a body. The other fact is, it is hard to defend against a strong attack. If the weapon accelerates, this affects the timing of a parry, relative to the distance of the attack."

Weapons to Empty Hand Transition in the Filipino Martial Arts

The Filipino martial arts are highly conceptual in nature. Understanding the underlying concepts of the Filipino martial arts is the key to mastering the transition from weapon to weapon and to empty hand fighting.

In the following excerpt from his letter published in the September, 1990 issue of *Inside Kung Fu* magazine, Filipino Master Rene Latosa expounds on the conceptual nature of the Filipino martial arts, it reads, "The key element to the Filipino arts is the concept to make transitions from weapon to weapon and to empty hand. The remarkable feat ultimately unifies the Filipino martial arts. The common denominator in the Filipino martial arts is its concepts not its techniques. My goals are to preserve my cultural heritage by not allowing the Filipino mar-

tial arts to get so convoluted with techniques that people forget the Filipino martial arts are more than just techniques."

The most common way of translating Filipino martial arts weapon techniques into empty hand applications is through the basic angles of attacks. In this scheme, you retain the angle but substitute the blade or the stick with your limbs. Take for example angle number one - a downward diagonal blow from left to right common to many Filipino martial arts styles. The gist of the whole thing is it doesn't matter whether you're using a baseball bat, a kitchen knife or your hammer fist; a downward diagonal blow is a downward diagonal blow. It won't take much practice to identify what empty hand technique would fit best a particular angle of attack.

One could fit hooking punches and roundhouse kicks on horizontal angles and uppercuts and knee strikes on upward angles.

Even grappling and joint locks could be learned and understood by observing how an Escri-



Understanding the concepts behind Filipino martial arts weapon techniques is the key to translate it to empty hand applications.

mador dislodge a weapon out of his opponent's hand. A joint lock occurs when a joint is manipulated in an unnatural way, twisting it beyond its range of motion or putting a fulcrum under it (a fulcrum could be a limb or a foreign object such as a weapon) and pulling it on the opposite direction of its natural bend. A lock can be applied on any joint - the fingers, wrists, elbows, shoulders, neck, spine, knees and ankles. Strangulation can be done using a stick or your bare forearms. Proficiency is further gained by developing the physical attributes that would make the techniques created more effective such as sensitivity, speed coordination and strength.

Knowing the scientific basis of Filipino martial arts concepts would broaden a practitioner's option on its uses. The concept of limb destruction (commonly referred to as "defanging the snake") for instance can be interpreted with or without weapons. Categorically, there are two ways to destroy a limb: through joint manipulation or by using strikes.

Under the light of modern medical science, one would learn

why the ancient Filipinos chose the limbs as primary targets. A bone shattered to pieces resulting from a blunt instrument hit poses grave threat to nearby nerves and vessels depending on the location of the break. Bone slivers can pinch and tear surrounding structures resulting to hemorrhage. Even if the bone survived the impact and there was no external bleeding, a direct blow on an artery could rupture it causing arterial blood to leak. If not treated fast, both conditions could lead to gangrene and may require amputation.

An adept Filipino blade fighter knows that he does not have to stab the torso to kill his adversary. Without immediate medical treatment, a knife slash that severed the brachial arteries (located inside the elbow crooks) would result to hemorrhagic shock in 15- seconds and death in one-and-a-half minutes. A similar deep cut on the radial arteries (located at the inside portion of the wrists) would cause unconsciousness in 30-seconds and death in two minutes. The femoral arteries that run along the inside of the thighs up to the groin area are also lethal

targets in knife fighting.

An Escrimador could easily destroy his enemy's upper limbs even without a stick or blade. The nerve-rich areas at the base of the arms, the shoulders and the armpits are excellent targets. The armpit areas are so vulnerable that the improper use of crutches could damage the nerve networks underneath it causing paralysis to the triceps and wrist extensors. A grappling move that dislocated the shoulder joint may press the arm bone on the nerve of the armpits paralyzing part of that limb. Any hits on the various points of the arm could damage the median, ulnar and radial nerves that run along its length. The effect may range from pins-and-needles sensation to temporary motor dysfunction to permanent paralysis, depending on the force of the blow.

The offensive mindset of the Filipino martial arts, which preferred to hit rather than block whenever possible could also be interpreted with or without weapons. This particular concept can be interpreted as interception or stop-hitting where you smack your opponent dead on his track using your limbs, a stick, a blade or even a projectile.

Various Forms of Filipino Indigenous Wrestling

While known for the efficacy of its stick and blade fighting techniques, the Filipino martial arts is a multi-faceted and complete combat system that incorporates empty hand skills like boxing and wrestling. Wrestling being the most natural form of fighting known to man thrives in the different parts of the Philippines.

Historians Gregorio F. Zaide and Sonia M. Zaide wrote in the book "Jose Rizal: Life, Works, and Writings of a Genius Writer, Scientist and National Hero," that native wrestling was included in the early education of Jose Rizal, it reads, "His three uncles, brothers of his mother, exerted a good influence on him. Tio [Uncle] Jose Alberto, who had studied for 11-years in a British school in Calcutta, India, and had traveled in Europe inspired him to develop his artistic ability. Tio Manuel, a husky



Native wrestling was part of the early education of Jose Rizal

and athletic man, encouraged him to develop his frail body by means of physical exercises, including horseback riding, walking and wrestling. And Tio Gregorio, a book lover, intensified his voracious reading of good books."

It is with much certainty that Rizal learned "buno," a style of native wrestling popular in the Tagalog region where he hailed. Another part of the book narrates how the young Rizal used his knowledge of wrestling in an actual fight, it says, "Jose challenged Pedro to a fight. The latter readily accepted, thinking that he could easily beat the Calamba boy who was smaller and younger. The two boys wrestled furiously in the classroom, much to the glee of their classmates. Jose, having learned the art of wrestling from his athletic Tio Manuel, defeated the bigger boy. For this feat, he became popular among his classmates."

It is perhaps Rizal's early exposure to native wrestling that whetted his interest to study judo during his brief sojourn in Japan in 1888.

The popularity of "buno" in the region is evident in the fact that the preeminent Tagalog poet Francisco "Balagtas" Baltazar mentioned it along with "Arnis" in his epic "Florante at Laura."

Buno, today is often taught as part of some systems of arnis-eskrima in Luzon. It is hard to find authentic instruction on the subject.

In the mountainous areas of northern Luzon, another form of native wrestling called "bultong" is practiced among the

Ifugaos. Bultong matches were done on grass or dirt and often were meant to settle disputes involving adultery and landownership. Nid Anima in his book "The Filipino Martial Arts," wrote of the nature of a bultong match, it reads, "The objective of the bultong, as with other forms of wrestling, is to throw the opponent to the ground. In the process of a match, they may be elbowing, boxing, scratching, eye-gouging, nose pinching, moustache-pulling, hair-pulling, rib-tickling and other unfair tactics that cannot be avoided, wrestling being what it is: a game that has no room for niceties. Once a contestant's back is pinned to the ground, the contest is declared over and the combatant atop wins."

Another form of Filipino wrestling identified with the Visayas particularly the island of Panay is "dumog." Dumog made its way into the American martial arts scene through the teachings of Dan Inosanto. Paul Vunak, a student of Inosanto even produced an instructional video on dumog and how to incorporate it to the jeet kune do street fighting matrix.

In the Philippines, dumog contest were usually held during a town fiesta. Tranquilino Solanoy, a burly Visayan amateur boxer and dumog player told me that such contests were done on dirt and offer prize money. Solanoy narrated that his grandfather who was a champion dumog player retained much of his strength in his old age. The old man, he said, can still carry sacks of rice and can throw an opponent in a very ballistic manner. Just like in bultong, the objective in dumog is to pin the

opponent's back flat to the ground. Solanoy revealed that some dumog players freely incorporated western wrestling techniques into their repertoire of native dumog maneuvers.

Being an archipelago, the wrestling arts of the Philippines are as diverse as its stick and blade fighting arts. Besides buno, bul-tong and dumog there are other forms of native Filipino wrestling that need to be investigated and

documented among these are: layug (Cebu), pantok (Pampanga), tulot (Pangasinan), gabbo (Ilocos), lampungan (Bicol), dama (Igorot), lawidan (Mangyan), silaga (Sama) and kapulubod (Maranaw).

Wrestling, being the oldest method of fighting known to man evolved into a mere combat sport in many parts of the world. But in the Filipino martial arts, where weapons techniques are taught to practitioners from day one, wres-

tling retained much of its original war-like character. The latter can be summed up in the words of Mickey Dimic in his book "Mixed Martial Arts Unleashed," he wrote, "The aim in all styles of wrestling is to knock the other person down to the ground and get on top of him or her. The reason for this is that in war, the one on the ground is normally helpless to weapon thrusts from the one on top, or from his or her comrades nearby."

The Role of Solo and Two-man Training in the Filipino Martial Arts



The skills of the Filipino martial arts are traditionally taught one-on-one. Out of the instructor's presence, it is up to the student Escrimador to refine what he has learned. Solo and two-man training have their rightful places in the practice of the Filipino martial arts.

Shadow fighting (called

carencia in some old styles of Arnis-Escrima) is still the best form of solo training. One good thing I love about Escrima is you were able to accomplish a lot in a single workout. A non-stop shadow fighting routine for

three minutes for instance carries with it the benefits of technique development, cardiovascular stimulation and muscular conditioning.

In Arnis-Escrima, power and good structure are mainly achieved through repetition. A common practice among Escrimadors is to swing their stick over and over again in thin air to

learn how to put their body weight behind a strike. A good indicator of power is how loud the swishing sound your stick can make.

The following quote from Master Amante Mariñas was published in Mark Wiley's "Filipino Martial Culture," it reads, "If you want to be become good you must practice, practice, practice. At one time I did 20,000 strikes in one day. It took me six hours. The next day my arm was tired but I didn't stop practicing, I developed Arnis elbow because I was using an anahaw stick, which weighed about one kilogram. Swinging was easy but jabbing was difficult with the heavy stick."

Besides hitting thin air, the Escrimador can practice his techniques on an inanimate object like a heavy

bag or a tree. Ideally, the woods is a good place to practice where one can hit rebounding branches and practice footwork on an uneven terrain. I have also seen fellow Escrimadors who have constructed excellent dummies as training aids. A word of caution though about hitting surfaces whether with a weapon or with your bare hands. If your hitting an object with full power, be sure that it is not something that is more stable and more rooted than you are or something that is very dense. The reason for this is if you opted for such objects, you will be absorbing much of your striking force every time you deliver a blow. This could lead to joint, ligaments and tendons damage in the long run.

Another potent form of solo training though often overlooked is visualization. The late legendary death match master Floro Villabrille once said that he practiced visualization right before every match. The effectiveness of visualization in maximizing athletic performance has long been validated scientifically. The following is an interesting quote from "The Mental Athlete" by Kay Porter and Judy Foster, it reads, "You must know what you want and what results you are aiming for in a particular visualization. It is good to have the 'language' of your event, the terms and idioms of your sport. Along with this you should have a clear picture of how it looks to perform your event perfectly. This you can get by watching the best athletes in your sport in person, on television, or looking at pictures in magazines

or at posters. We suggest that you hang pictures of athletes performing your event to perfection where you can see them as often as possible." Porter and Foster explained that visualization enhanced performance because the brain cannot really distinguish between mental and physical experience.

While solo training would contribute greatly to the refinement of skills, practicing alone is not enough to attain mastery. As in other martial arts, there are certain aspects of the Filipino martial arts that cannot be perfected by solo training alone like spatial judgment, kinesthetic sensitivity (the ability to read the energy of one's opponent) and the attainment of fighting spirit. All these three components are best polished with a live training partner.

Every Escrimador has a preferred range of fighting be it short, medium or long range. In a fight, bridging the gap between you and your opponent is almost always the first problem you have to deal with. Gauging the proper distance is crucial in the delivery of a strike for it would be the basis if a particular blow would land with accuracy and power. The experience is totally different between banging with your stick at a stationary sand bag or a stack of tires and trying to hit a moving opponent with it.

Since clinching and wrestling happen in real fights, kinesthetic sensitivity is a worthwhile attribute to acquire. The ability to read your opponent's energy through feeling pressure or the

lack thereof cannot be learned alone. This can only be acquired through the guidance of an able teacher and by constantly practicing with a live training partner.

Finally, the fighting spirit of an Escrimador is best honed through free sparring. Despite the myriad of drills in the Filipino martial arts, free sparring is still the closest thing to real fighting. The mental and emotional fortitude as well as the physical tenacity required to overcome an opponent can only be learned through the practice of sparring. The kind of safety equipment to be used is for the individual Escrimador to decide depending on the intensity of sparring he wants to experience.

A common thread I noticed among authentic masters of the Filipino martial arts is their willingness to spar. I have observed that such trait among these men was born out of sublime confidence on their skills and not because of boastfulness and arrogance. Pain is a specific element that can only be introduced best via sparring. Dan Inosanto, in his book "Absorb What is Useful," relates how one of his teachers introduced him to the element of pain, he says, "Pain is important according to my early Escrima instructor Master Ellustrisimo [Illustrisimo], who said, "I hit you hard because you will never understand. Notice it affects your respiratory system not just your hands." I didn't know that. And even hearing it often isn't enough for it to stick so well. Unless you are taken to the threshold of pain, you won't truly understand."

The Role of the “Alive Hand” in Arnis-Escrima

The “alive hand” in Arnis-Escrima pertains to the non-weapon hand. It is called “alive hand” because though at times it may not be holding a weapon, it is never passive but plays an active role in combat.

When an Escrimador wields long and short weapons as in the case of *espada y daga*, which was borrowed from western fencing, the “alive hand” is the hand that holds the shorter weapon. In the West, historically, the dagger was originally used mainly for parrying. Pertaining to the rapier fencing techniques of the 16th century Aldo Nadi in his book “Nadi on Fencing,” wrote, “Most parries were made with the dagger, or by moving the body out of the line of attack.”

If the Escrimador is using two weapons of equal length, the one in the “alive hand” plays a secondary role. When not holding any weapon, the “alive hand” is usually positioned near the center of the chest.

In an active mode, the “alive hand” can dart above or beneath the weapon hand to accomplish the following objectives: to check on the opponent’s weapon hand while delivering a counter-strike, to jam an oncoming attack, to apply a joint lock, to execute a disarm, to push to destroy an opponent’s balance or to hit.

Of all these objectives of the “alive hand,” the easiest to come out in a real fight are the push and the hit. In most film footages of real contact stick fighting, it is not uncommon to see fighters driving their opponents backward

with a push on the face with the non-weapon hand while delivering thrust on the upper and middle body with the stick hand. Hits like punches on the head and body were also prevalent in close range but I have yet to see a perfect disarm or lock done by the “alive hand” in a full-speed stick-fighting match.

The use of the “alive hand” is taught at length in Filipino martial arts styles that favor close-quarter fighting. Balintawak, a Cebuano close-quarter style of Escrima uses the “alive hand” extensively. John Russel, author of “The Balintawak System of Arnis-Escrima,” describes the system’s use of the “alive hand” with the following words: “The empty/live or submissive hand in initial defense with the weapon / stick can do two simple things; it can break/stop or flow through the opponent’s primary weapon hand or even the opponent’s empty/live hand. What it does after this initial contact is entirely up to the individual and their style.”

In his classic book “The Filipino Martial Arts,” Dan Inosanto relates how Escrima’s “alive hand” worked against the Spanish swordplay, it reads, “During the Spanish reign in the Philippines and in combat situations where the ancient Filipinos fought against the Spanish in swordplay, the “alive hand” played an important part in confusing the Spanish swordplay.” Training in the use of the “alive hand” develops important psychophysical attributes like kinesthetic sensitivity, spatial judgment, reaction time and flow. While Arnis-Escrima is generally



a weapons oriented martial art, its practice of the use of the “alive hand” particularly in disarms indirectly teaches its practitioners the basics of joint manipulation and grappling. By understanding the principles of how weapons could be dislodged from the opponent’s grip by manipulating the joints of the wrists, elbows and shoulders (twisting it beyond its range of motion or pulling it towards the opposite direction of its natural bend), the student would soon realize that this is applicable to the other joints of the body as well.

In contrast, *largo mano* styles of Filipino stick fighting that favors engaging an opponent from long range pay scant or no attention on the use of the “alive hand.” In my conversations with Manong Eric Olavides, founder of Eskrima De Campo- JDC-IO, he related that his teacher, the late *juego todo* [all-out, full-contact stick-fighting match] champion Grandmaster Jose Caballero scoffed at the idea of getting close to an opponent and grabbing his weapon hand with the “alive hand.” Olavides said that Caballero emphasized on targeting the weapon hand from long-range with fast and precise strikes. It is a testament to the potency of Caballero’s fighting techniques that he fought the best of the bests in Es-

crima and retired from juego todo fighting undefeated.

Another important function of the non-weapon hand but often unrecognized by many fighters is that it acts as a counterbalance to the offensive or defensive moves of the weapon hand. A good analogy to use is the tail of a tiger. While the tiger's teeth and claws are the

dominant and more observable body parts when it fights or stalks a prey, a tiger's agility would be greatly reduced if you cut off its tail. These movement dynamics are also evident in the practice of western fencing. In my study of fencing with the foil, I have observed that the non-weapon hand acts as counterbalance and enhanc-

es the forward motion of the lunge the same way a tiger's tail whips backward whenever it pounces on a prey. This characteristic of the "alive hand" is ubiquitous in all forms weapons fighting regardless of range and whether the practitioner is aware of it or not.

Filipino War Dances

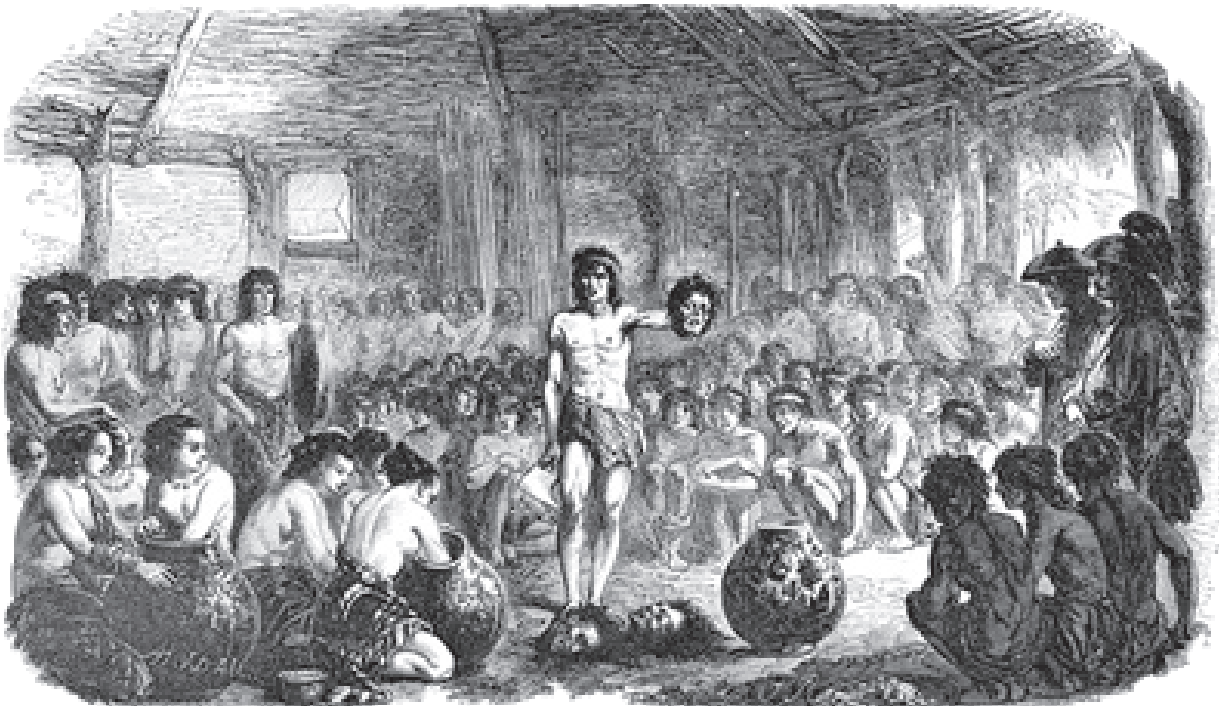
Every tribal warrior societies in the world have their own versions of war dances. The Philippines being an archipelago and possessing a strong warrior culture owns a variety of war dances many of them displaying martial arts techniques. Performing war dances have a religious and practical purpose; besides invoking the protection of a particular deity in battle, war dances boost a warrior's fighting spirit and give him the opportunity to practice combative moves. War dances were often per-

formed to the rhythm of percussion instruments.

One Filipino war dance I personally experienced performing is the maglalatik (pronounced "mahg-lah-lah-TIHK) or the coconut dance. Maglalatik, which involves the wearing of coconut shells on the body of its dancers, is tame compared to war dances from the highlands of Northern Philippines or the Muslim south of the country. The reason for this is that this dance developed in the Christianized part of Luzon.

Maglalatik is a mock-battle between Christians and Moros. A maglalatik performance involves two groups of dancers; one group wearing red trousers represents the Christians while the other wearing green trousers represents the Moros. The mock-battle was over the possession of "latik" (fried coconut milk curd), which is a popular ingredient of Filipino snacks.

Maglalatik dancers first strike the coconut shells attached to their own bodies then they will proceed to hit the shells on each



A vintage print depicting a headhunting tribe in the Philippines (source: Project Gutenberg)

other's bodies. A person who understands the intricacies of the movements of the Filipino martial arts could easily spot combative movements in the maglalatik dance, among them are the criss-crossing pattern akin to the movements of sinawali double stick fighting as well as empty hand gunting [scissor] trapping motions.

Although no longer practiced, headhunting is a long tradition among the mountain tribes of Northern Philippines and associated with it are various war dances.

The pattong of the Bontoc tribe was meant to instill courage and strength to the warrior prior to a headhunting expedition or war. This dance was also performed during the dry months of February, March and April to beseech the deity Lumawig to send rain on the fields. Warriors performing the pattong brandish their head axes and spears while clashing their shields. Another Bontoc pre-headhunting ritual was the mangayaw where new warriors were presented to the tribal council.

The Kalingas, another mountain tribe of Northern Philippines has a ritual dance called idaw. A ritual leader called the "mandadawak" facilitated the idaw. In idaw, a group of warrior watches over the number of insects entering a plate; the number of which will determine the number of heads to be taken in during a headhunting expedition. The Kalingas also have a celebratory dance called a takiling, which is performed after a successful headhunting expedition. The crowned heroes of such missions were

called "Mingaos."

Still another mountain tribe from the north is the Ifugaos. The Ifugaos performed a dance ritual called "monhim-ong" to mark a violent death of a fellow tribesman. Men performing the monhim-ong move in a single file while beating a percussion instrument called "bangibang."

Equally war-like as the war dances of Northern Philippines are those found in the Muslim south of the country. Lanao del Norte boasts of a war dance called "sagayan." Sagayan is a spectacle to behold as its performers brandish kampilan and shields turning and leaping, trance-like to the rhythm of percussion instruments. The animated motion of the sagayan was believed to drive away evil spirits.

A war dance called "binanog" is still practiced by the Manobo tribe of Agusan del Sur and Agusan del Norte. Binanog imitates the gestures of fighting off an eagle attacking a hen and her chicks. The Subanons of Zamboanga meanwhile perform a war dance called "sohten" to please the gods.

In Sulu, the Tausug tribe, known for its warrior tradition has a war dance called "burung-talo." This dance, which is acrobatic in nature and displaying stern facial expressions mimics the fight between an eagle and a cat.

Larry Gabao, president of the Philippine Folk Dance Society, Cultural Center of the Philippines and the chairman of the Physical Education Department of the Philippine Normal University ex-

plains the "langka tradition" in the dances of Southern Philippines, he wrote, "The proximity of Philippine shore to the Malay Peninsula accounts for Malay influences in the martial dances particularly, those found in the islands of Jolo, Sulu, the southern-most tip of the archipelago. Langka, the term used to mean "dance," has many types: Langka-Silat, Langka-Pansak, Langka-Lima and Langka Budyang. Langka Silat is a dance simulation of a fight in graceful and flowing arm movement. This is almost the same as the Burong Talo, which is an imitative dance of the fight between the cat and the eagle in flight. Also, of the langka tradition is the Langka-Pansak - a variation of slow-paced movements punctuated by a momentary pause at the end of every stance sometimes emphasized by the use of a pis (oversized handkerchief). Langka-Lima, on the other hand, provides a combat variation featuring five defense positions. There is also the Langka-Budyang, the only martial dance variation performed by women in graceful leaps and kicks characterized by feminine arm thrusts and the use of a fan."

On the original intent of war dances, Mark Wiley in "Filipino Martial Culture," wrote, "In the past, martial dance was viewed as a rehearsal for actual combat. As such, it was a rite and a symbol of initiation into manhood. Various unspoken symbolic movements and gestures - choreographed and improvised - centered around man's innate desire to be victorious in war - more specifically, in individual hand-to-hand combat."

Anting-anting and the Filipino Martial Arts

The acquisition of an “anting-anting,” an object of supernatural powers is a common part of the old practice of arnis-escrima. While the mystical amulet is the most common form of anting-anting in the Philippines, the anting-anting comes in varied forms. It could be a prayer (oracion), a small stone or a crocodile tooth. The ways of acquiring an anting-anting are also diverse. Some were passed on from father to son while others were believed to be acquired after defeating spirit warriors. The belief system behind the anting-anting is a combination of animism and Catholicism. Those who own an anting-anting believe that its power is best replenished and tested during Good Fridays. The Catholic Church as well as the various evangelical churches in the Philippines does not condone the use of anting-anting. Its etymology unknown, the anting-anting was also known by other names such as “agimat,” “bertud,” or “galing.” The anting-anting is distinct from the “gayuma [love potion],” which is another popular facet of Philippine esoterica.

It was in 1999, at the turn of the century that a number of my Filipino martial arts colleagues began experimenting with oraciones. They’ve joined an ancient blade cult whose initiation rites include being hacked by a very sharp bolo several times. This particular type of anting-anting belongs to the “kabal” or “kumat oracion” category that were believed to make the bearer impervious to bladed weapon attacks. All of my friends emerged unharmed from the hacking ritual. But one of them, who

later on tried to replicate the feat in an independent demonstration, sustained a very nasty injury.

Another type of anting-anting that is also commonly associated with Escrimadores is the “tagaliwas [diverter]” that claims to have the power to cause the bullets to miss from guns fired at point blank range.

In an article titled “Unmasking the Art - Artist” by Marilitz Dizon (Rapid Journal Vol. 6 No. 3), Romeo Macapagal, one of the senior students of the late legendary grandmaster Antonio “Tatang” Illustrisimo narrates his experience on his teacher’s demonstration of this kind of power, it says, “Before Tatang’s health deteriorated in 1992, his mind was very sharp and focused, his will power tremendous. On Good Fridays we would go to empty lots to test his power. On a sheet of bond paper, Tatang would scribble a few oraciones and have it set up for target. Now, my two elder sons and I are competent shots, but at a distance of five meters we are only shooting around that 8 x 11 inches sheet of paper, knocking its edges only at three meters. Good sight pictures, good squeeze, good ammo, but we could not hit the target. Whatever the mechanisms, it worked.”

One documented mass-use of anting-anting that ended in disaster was the case of Valentin delos Santos and his religious-political society Lapiang Malaya. In May 21, 1967, the then 86-year old Delos Santos and the members of his society demanded reforms from the administration of Presi-



Various oraciones inscribed on a vest. This anting-anting was said to belong to General Macario Sakay

dent Ferdinand Marcos. The group, armed with bolos and believing that their anting-anting could ward off all harms against their person marched against the military and ended up being massacred.

The use of the anting-anting is almost always associated with uprisings in the Philippines. During the 1896 Philippine Revolution against Spain, It was said that the Supremo of the Katipunan, Andres Bonifacio carried an amulet called Santiago de Galicia - Birhen del Pilar for protection.

Manong Ignacio Mabait, an old-school Escrimador whom I have befriended in 2000 showed me his own anting-anting – it was a talisman implanted in one of his arms by his father. He intimated to me that his father was also an Escrimador who have fought against the Spaniards and consecutively against the Americans. Manong Ignacio himself fought against the Japanese in Manila during World War II. The implant looked like a bead that moved about under his skin. I surmised that, that kind of anting-anting was the same kind

possessed by the founder of the Philippine Independent Church, Gregorio Aglipay as mentioned in Nid Anima's book "The Filipino Martial Arts," it reads, "Perhaps the coincidence that this writer is Aglipay's godson qualifies him for the revelation of factual information about the Aglipayan bishop which are heretofore unchronicled. From my grandfather who was a priest in his church, I gathered that his early morning gurgle constituted not water but vinegar. Refuted as a man's extraordinary strength, one manifestation of Aglipay's strength was in the way he toyed a heavy iron bar like a child toying a pencil, holding one of its tips between thumb and

index finger and swaying it.

Aglipay's trip to Bangued Abra was characterized by lodging in my grandfather's house. His siestas there were aided by one of grandfather's sons, Agustin, whom he was particularly fond of. The bishop's back was a strange phenomenon, according to Uncle Agustin. Scattered on different places on his back were five flesh corns and about the size of corn grains, too. Pressing one of these would send them all scrambling playfully, taking each other's different places in the manner of children's games."

While there are still Escrimadores that consider anting-anting as part of their martial arts

practice, the majority of Filipino martial art practitioners in the Philippines today, including the top masters put more importance to practical skills than esoteric practices. I got the following succinct answer from Master Yuli Romo, another senior student of Tatang Ilustrisimo and founder of Bahad Zubu when I asked his opinion on the subject: "I believe in oracion but I give more importance to practical skills. The Bible says that we have guardian angels and they were there for our protection. I believe in that. But to say that I'll use an oracion so that my opponent would not be able to hit me, that is another story."

Possible Foreign Influences on the Filipino Martial Arts



A painting by National Artist Carlos "Botong" Francisco depicting Limahong's invasion of the Philippines

Of the many foreign forces who have invaded the Philippines, the Spaniards were the only ones that made a tangible influence on the Filipino martial arts. The concept of *espada y daga* (sword and dagger) for instance was borrowed from Spanish sword-play. Even today, a lot of Filipino martial art terminologies are still in Spanish.

The influence of Spanish swordsmanship may have entered the Filipino martial art after

intermarriages occurred between Spaniards and Filipinos and on instances where the Spanish government had to train the natives as an auxiliary fighting force against invaders.

On the latter, the Spanish clergy may have possibly played an extensive role. On the extent of the authority of Spanish friars, the historian Rosario Mendoza Cortes wrote, "As the only Spaniard in town and for many miles around, he became not only the spiritual caretaker of the area but the representative of the government as well. He became part of the administrative machinery of the colony," (Pangasinan, 1572 to 1800, New Day Publisher, 1974). So great was the involvement of these priests in their communities that some of them even took up arms in the event of a foreign invasion.

On the participation of the Spanish friars in the British invasion, National Artist for Literature Nick Joaquin in his book "Manila, My Manila," wrote, "Also heroes of the British war were a host of anonymous friars who left their convents, took arms, and led the resistance in Cavite, Laguna, Bulacan and Pampanga. The Franciscans of Laguna held off the British while treasure smuggled out of hiding was conveyed to Anda in Pampanga. When Chinese rebels armed by the British attacked Pasig, they were driven back by an impromptu army captained by a Franciscan friar. The fiercest fighters were the Augustinians, whom the British abhorred as mortal antagonists. Ten Augustinians died in action and nineteen were captured in battle. An Augustinian friar led the guerilla band that ambushed British troops in Bulacan. It is said that several of

the friar guerrilleros became so fond of fighting they did not return to their convents at the end of the war but continued operating in the boondocks, this time as bandit leaders."

Another book that mentions the Spanish clergy's valor in combat is "Swish of the Kris" by Victor Hurley, a part of it reads. "Indeed, matters reached such a state that before the end of the year warships were ordered out for another attack on Jolo. Four regiments of infantry and a corps of artillery aided the gunboats. Included was a battalion of Cebuanos (sic) who sought revenge for the Moro raids. The wives of the Cebuanos (sic) emulated Lysistrata in reverse. Every wife took an oath before Father Ibanez to deny forever their husbands all of their favors if the Cebuano men turned their backs to the Moros. In the battle of Jolo, Father Ibanez lost his life in the assault on a Morocotta. The good Father tucked his cassock about his waist and plunged into the thickest of the battle. The Cebuanos (sic) performed prodigies of valor and Jolo fell again. The seat of the Sultanate was removed across the island to Maybun, and the Moros paid regular visits to Jolo to slaughter the Spanish garrison, which remained."

Besides the Spaniards, there are other foreign forces that could have made an influence on the Filipino martial art.

Though the Chinese preceded the Spaniards in the Philippines, their influence came in a bit late. Joaquin commented that while the Filipinos were in constant contact with the Chinese primarily because of trade for 10,000 years, so little of Chinese

civilization reached the Philippines. Again, in "Manila, My Manila," he wrote, "The Chinito look would come (along with pancit and lugaw) only after 1565, when the Chinese began to migrate here in droves. In the history of Chinese-Philippine relations, therefore, those ten thousand years of supposed past together have little or no importance. The impact of Chinese culture on us begins only in 1565."

If official documentation was to be the sole basis, the Chinese martial arts only influenced the Filipino martial art during the last century. It happened when Grandmaster Johnny Chiuten got involved in the development of Lapunti Arnis De Abaniko of Grandmaster Filemon Caburnay. A student of the legendary Lao Kim, Chiuten infused elements of his Dragon-Tiger Kung Fu to Lapunti Arnis De Abaniko.

But there may be earlier instances where the Chinese martial arts may have blended with the Filipino martial art. One of them may have happened after the attack of the Chinese pirate Limahong on the Philippines in November 1574. On the Chinese corsair's invasion Joaquin wrote, "Some 600 of the pirates fell in battle, including poor Lieutenant Sioco. Killed were around 50 of the defenders. Limahong lost no time decamping from the bay. He sailed to Pangasinan and there tried to establish a colony but was driven from there by his nemesis Juan de Salcedo. Some of his men escaped to Igorot country, where they sired a mestizo breed among the highlanders."

Known for their fearsome prowess in combat, it is highly probable that these Chinese pirates may have had shared their fighting

skills with the Philippine highland tribes where they found refuge. It is interesting to note that the Chinese pirate Koxinga taught combat to the natives of Taiwan when he came to the territory. In an article titled "The Sung Chiang Battle Array - Taiwanese Martial Arts Show," Bernado Tusó wrote, "Taiwan was a sparsely populated, practically virgin island when Koxinga and his people arrived. To aid in the development of the island's economy and protect it against possible invasion by the Manchus and the Dutch, Koxinga trained and armed the peasants. Many of the weapons used in the Sung Chiang battle array are actually the farm tools--rakes, sickles, hooks, umbrellas - used by the early peasantry."

The Japanese may have also imparted influence on the Filipino martial art long before their conquest of the Philippines during the Second World War. Another part of Joaquin's "Manila, My Manila," reads, "Dilao, a village occupying the present location of City Hall and the San Marcelino area, included a Japanese quarter on the banks of the Estero Tripa de Gallina [where Hotel Mirador and the Tabacalera

now stand]. The site has been a Japanese ghetto since pre-Hispanic times. When the Spanish took Manila, they found twenty Japanese living there, one of whom was a Christian."

Joaquin told that most of the Japanese in Dilao (literally means "yellow" in Tagalog) were displaced Samurai warriors or ronins. Hence the friars decided that it was appropriate to set up a new parish in the area in honor of a soldier saint. So was created the San Miguel parish in Manila.

The ronins of Manila remained adherents of Bushido or "The Way of the Warrior." Though the Lieutenant-Governor Antonio de Morga commended them as "honest and law-abiding," they remained fighters. In fact, 500 Japanese mercenaries from Dilao participated in Governor Juan de Silva's conquest of the Moluccas in 1615 and Spain's battle against the Dutch in Malacca in 1616. These displaced Samurai warriors were said to be hired "at high pay," a testament to their formidable fighting prowess.

Joaquin said in his book that the San Miguel Parish did not remain exclusively Japanese but became "mixed" in character by

the 1640s, "A community of Japanese and Filipinos," he explained. Given the tremendous spiritual and nationalistic characteristic the Japanese attached to the sword, it was doubtful if they ever taught kenjutsu (skill with sword) to a foreigner at that time. There's a remote possibility though that they may have imparted some of their jujitsu (empty hand fighting skills) to Filipinos.

When the Americans came to the Philippines at the turn of the 20th century, they introduced Filipinos to their brand of combat sports like western boxing and wrestling. While there are interesting historical materials presented indicating that Filipino martial art concepts did influenced western boxing, I believe it was not one-sided and an exchange took place. Elements of western boxing made it to the Filipino martial art too particularly the use of modern equipments like the heavy bag and the speed bag as well as numerous combat conditioning methods. I have also known players of dumog (the indigenous wrestling of Panay) who have incorporated western wrestling techniques into their native grappling arts.

Silat and the Filipino Martial Arts

Silat as a martial art is characterized by graceful dance-like movements. While it thrives in southern Philippines, Silat in the strictest term is not an indigenous Filipino martial art.

I first witnessed an exhibition of Silat ohlaraga (sport silat) in 1991 and I remember being impressed with the artistry of the movements of the players. The second time I saw a Silat performance was in an informal gathering of martial artists in 2006. It was combat Silat this time and the two practitioners demonstrated their ways of using a knife. I would describe their techniques as very aggressive and ballistic.

Mark Wiley in his book “Filipino Martial Culture” wrote that Silat and Islam came to the Philippines hand-in-hand, “Along with the transplantation of Malaysian martial arts came their practitioner’s Islamic religion. The Muslim religion may have filtered into the Sulu archipelago and Mindanao as early as the thirteenth-century. In the Philippines, early evidence of an Islamic presence is furnished by a tombstone of a trader-missionary in Indanan, Sulu. It bears the inscription “710 AH,” using the Islamic dating system, which in relation with the Christian calendar, is approximately 1270 A.D. By 1380, Islam had spread throughout Mindanao and Sulu.”

Nid Anima in his book “Filipino Martial Arts” specifically named four characters responsible for bringing silat in the Philippines, it reads, “Available historical data points to three persons – Tubba, Sahudah and Wabulong – as the ones who introduced the Silat into this country during the latter half

of the 19th century. All three belongs to the Celebes tribe known as Bugis. But they seem to be not really the first, after all. Another member of the Bugis tribe by the name of Samaru, also a master of this deadly martial sport, came much earlier than these three men credited with the introduction of Silat.”

Besides his personal research, Anima pointed to the works of the following writers as the sources of the materials in his book: “The Arnis in Sulu” (Sunday Times Magazine, February 18, 1962) and “The Disappearing Sport of Filipino Wrestling” (Sunday Mirror Magazine, September 4, 1962) by Lamberto Ticsay; and “Ancient Filipino Sports” by Tirzo Rodriguez published in Go Magazine.

Silat flourishes in Mindanao though not easy to find. One teacher who once taught Mindanao Silat generously to Muslims and non-Muslims in the Philippines was the late Hadji Yasser Tanadjalan.

Tanadjalan, who has a background in judo, Escrima and karate was taught by his father their family system of silat. He said that there are more than a 100 styles of Silat in Mindanao. Tanadjalan named the brand of Silat that he taught publicly “Mindanao Silat Asli.”

In an interview conducted by Marilitz Dizon for the Rapid Journal (Volume 4 No. 2) at the turn of the century, Tanadjalan explained the secret nature of Silat in Mindanao, it reads, “In Mindanao, if your parents do not know anything about the art, then you don’t bother to look for the



art. No one will just teach it to you because this art is usually hidden. Mindanao’s practices are quite different as against how the Silat forms are more openly practiced in Indonesia, Malaysia or in Manila.”

Tanadjalan became the head coach of the Philippine sport silat team in 1986. In that year, the Philippine team bagged a gold, silver and three bronze medals when the country’s players only managed to bring home bronze medals in the past – a testament to his excellent coaching skills. Sport Silat in the Philippines falls under the jurisdiction of the Philippine Pencak Silat Association.

In the same interview, he pointed out the differences between the traditional and sport aspects of the art, he said, “For sport, the artistic aspect is more emphasized. So the beauty and harmony of Pencak Silat is shown. There are also specific target areas only. Whereas in non-sport you can fling and hit anywhere.”

Tanadjalan also stated that not too many practitioners in the Philippines are knowledgeable in the use of inner power or tenaga dalam, “But people in Manila don’t know anything about this even if they are into the sport of Silat. It

is only the people of Mindanao, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore who know,” he said.

While he taught Silat to anyone he deemed worthy, Tanadjalan explained that there are facets of Silat that can only be understood by Muslims, “There are two kinds of silat. One is the Silat that everyone knows as the martial art or Pentjak Silat and the other is silat rahmi, which means the way of the religion,” he said. Hadji Yasser Tanadjalan passed away on December 25, 2007.

Though Silat technically is not an indigenous Filipino martial art, styles of Silat that were deeply rooted in various parts of the Philippines developed a distinct character. Indonesian writer and researcher Dipika Rai commenting on the fighting methodology and practical design of the Mindanao kris wrote the following words, “The Filipino blades are different because they are used differently. The Moro style of fighting is much different than that used in Java. Many of today’s Eskrima styles

have roots in these southern Muslim styles. They tend to be from the slashing school and the original design of the Java keris was not suitable.”

While no official documentation exists on the matter, Silat could have instilled its influence on the various indigenous Filipino martial arts through intermarriage between Muslims and Christians and through friendly exchange of knowledge between practitioners from both camps.

The United States as the Second Home of the Filipino Martial Arts

Next to the Philippines, I would say that the United States is the second home of the Filipino martial arts. Transplanted mainly through various waves of migration, the Filipino martial art, have established deep roots in the US.

The growth, evolution and mutation of the Filipino martial art in America are incomparable to any other nations where Philippine martial arts were also exported.

The Filipino martial art could have been exported to the US much earlier than the known 1900s exodus of Filipino farm laborers to California and Hawaii.

The book “Manila Men in the New World: Filipino Migration to Mexico and the Americas from the Sixteenth Century” by Floro L. Mercene tells that prior to the influx of farm worker from the Philippines to America during the 1900s, Filipino mariners under a Spanish command landed in Morro Bay, California in October 1587. It is amazing to realize that Filipi-

nos have reached the New World (what would become the United States of America) much earlier than the American colonization of the Philippines at the turn of the 20th century.

Commenting on the subject, Greg Macabenta wrote the following words in his column in the Manila Times, “Natives of Las Islas Filipinas were crossing the Pacific Ocean to the New World over half a century before the Mayflower crossed the Atlantic. They were crewmen in the Spanish galleons that sailed from Manila to Acapulco in the course of the Galleon Trade, from 1565 to 1815.”

Lafcadio Hearn, an American journalist wrote an article in the March 31, 1883 issue of Harper’s Weekly, about a Filipino settlement in Saint Malo, Louisiana. The settlers of the community that were called “Manilamen,” were believed to be the roots of Filipinos in America. Hearn at that

time believed that the settlement was already in existence for 50-years however, extensive research conducted by Marina Espina, a librarian at the University of New Orleans revealed that it could have existed earlier. Espina in 1988 published the results of her studies in a book entitled “Filipinos in Louisiana” (A. F. Laborde & Sons, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1988).

Hearn described the Manilamen as seasoned fishermen who were robust and polite and could speak in Tagalog and Spanish.

Evidences have been found that a number of Filipinos even participated in the American Civil War. This was proven by the research conducted by Nestor Palugod Enriquez, a retired US Navy personnel turned Filipino American historian. Enriquez located the specific names of Filipino volunteers on the following records: the Massachusetts State Rosters, Military Images magazine, original muster rolls at

the National Archives, the New Hampshire Rosters (issued by State Adjutant General. Pension - Pension Records, National Archives, Washington, D.C.) and the Naval Rendezvous Reports (available at the National Archives, Washington, D.C.). There is a high probability that those early Filipinos in America may have had used their skills in Arnis-Escrima while participating in this war.

But the biggest part of the Filipino martial art migration in the US most probably occurred at the beginning of the 20th century when many Filipino men filled in the demand for workers in the plantations of Hawaii and the farmlands of California. Many Filipino martial art pioneers in America like Angel Cabales, Juanito Lacoste and Leo Giron were at one time or another worked as farm laborers in Hawaii and California. A part of Dan Inosanto's book "The Filipino Martial Arts," narrates of how Cabales made it to the US, it reads, "Cabales left the Philippines in 1939 and joined a crew of a cargo ship that took him to distant ports of the world. Each port, each foreign dock brought a new set of adventures and with them a knowledge of survival. After working in Alaska, Cabales wandered from county to county in California. He ultimately joined the Filipino farm laborers around Stockton where he now lives."

In the same book, a highlight of LaCoste's life as a plantation worker was mentioned, it says, "While in Hawaii he headed a major farm labor strike that the Filipinos in Stockton still talk about today. LaCoste is their hero. The strike itself cost the lives of a dozen farm workers and 22 policemen, but it put across the idea that

farm workers, like anyone else, should be given sufficient wages to live and support a family."

Mark Wiley, in his book "Filipino Martial Culture" tells how Giron arrived in America, "Like other Filipinos who relocated in the United States, Giron did so by way of boat. He traveled on the President Lincoln and docked in San Francisco on November 17, 1926. Soon thereafter he relocated to Stockton, California, and took work cutting celery and asparagus for seventeen and a half cents an hour. The hourly wage at that time was thirty-five cents an hour."

Perhaps one of the most notable early public demonstrations of the Filipino martial art in the US was that of Ben Largusa. Largusa, a disciple of death-match master Floro Villabrille performed at the historic Ed Parker Long Beach Karate International in 1964. Bruce Lee performed there too and Parker recalled in one of his writings that Lee and Largusa

impressed the other masters who were present during the event.

In 1966, Cabales opened the first public Escrima academy in the US in Stockton, California.

Then came global recognition via the medium of cinema. Inosanto briefly but spectacularly showcased the Filipino martial art to moviegoers worldwide through the film "The Game of Death" starring the legendary Lee. Known as Lee's protégé, Inosanto was responsible in introducing the late Founder of Jeet Kune Do to Escrima - specifically the use of the nunchaku. With an international superstar like Lee picking up Escrima sticks, the Filipino martial art was finally included in the world map of martial arts. Few would argue that this film is an important landmark in the history of the Filipino martial art and much of the Filipino martial art popularity today, it owed to Inosanto's film works.



A marker near Pasig River in Manila commemorating the 400-year maritime relation between Mexico and the Philippines.

The Panday of Pre-colonial Philippines

“**Panday**” is the Filipino word for blacksmith. Given the fact the Filipino martial arts collectively, is a weapons oriented system, it would be of great interest to its adherents to examine how the pandays of pre-colonial Philippines worked and produced weapons.

The most renowned Filipino blacksmith of the pre-colonial era is Panday Pira who lived between 1483 to 1576. Panday Pira was a resident of Pampanga though some historical accounts say his roots was in Southern Philippines. So exemplary was this blacksmith’s skill that the Spaniards later on commissioned him to open their first artillery foundry in the Philippines. Panday Pira was credited for inventing the *lantaka*, a portable cannon that could be swiveled at any angle during battle. The *lantaka* could be easily mounted on fortresses and raiding boats like the *karakoa*.

It is easy to postulate that it was because of Panday Pira that Pampanga became the home of a number of ancient Filipino blacksmithing techniques like “*pukpuk*” (heat and hammer method) and “*pituklip at subu*” (folding and forging of hard and soft steel).

While iron was already produced in ancient Philippines, the extraction of metal from the ore by primitive methods is a very tedious process hence it was more practical to trade local forest products for malleable cast iron if available. A regular source of such materials then was the Song merchants who regularly brought Chinese cauldrons to the country.

Besides being skill metallurgists, pre-colonial Filipino

blacksmiths, specifically those who specialized in sword making practiced mysticism and spirituality. Using their knowledge of astrology, they observed certain positions of the planets before embarking in their sword making rituals. A fine *kris* or *kampilan* may sometimes take years to finish.

On the quality of swords of Southern Philippines, Victor Hurley in his book, *Swish of the Kris*,” wrote, “Instead of the rude obsidian knives of the Aztecs, the Spaniards at Lamitan found themselves opposed by a flashing kris which was the equal of their Toledo blade.”

An officer of the United States Army’s 22nd Infantry Division, Major O. J. Sweet, during the American colonization of the Philippines described Philippine blades with the following words, “The kris may be of any length and two or three inches wide. All of the knives, no matter what shape, are encased in wooden scabbards, and have a keenness of edge equaling that of a Damascus blade.”

During the Philippine - American war, there were accounts stating of how a Mindanao kris could cut through the barrel of a Springfield rifle.

William Henry Scott offers a more detailed description of the blades produced in the Visayas and Mindanao, in his book “*Barangay: Sixteenth Century Philippine Culture*,” he wrote, “There were two kinds of swords - *kris* (Visayan *kalis*) and *kampilan*, both words of Malay origin. The kris was a long double-edged blade (modern



specimens run to 60 to 70 centimeters), either straight or wavy but characterized by an asymmetrical hornlike flare at the hilt end, called *kalaw-kalaw* after the *kalaw* hornbill. The wavy kris was called *kiwo-kiwo*, and so was an astute, devious man whose movement could not be predicted. Hilts were carved of any solid material - hardwood, bone, antler, even shell - and great Datu warriors had them of solid gold or encrusted with precious stones. Blades were forged from layers of different grade of steel, which gave them a veined or mottled surface - damascened or “watered.”

Scott in his book expounds on the unique position of pandays in pre-colonial Philippine society, he says, “Blacksmiths were panday - or, more accurately, *panday sa puthaw*, workers in iron, to distinguish them from other craftsmen like goldsmiths, master carpenters, and boat builders, all of whom are called panday. Smithing was considered the noblest profession, probably because only the wealthiest *datus* had the means to import the raw material. If they were indeed the ultimate source of all metal tools, including the swidden farmers’ *bolos*, they would have exercised effective control over

Visayan means of production. As Father Alcina (1668a, 3:105) said, “it is certain that no profession among Visayans is more profitable than this, and so it is the most honored and esteemed among them, since the greatest chiefs are the best iron-workers.”

The common tools of the pre-colonial panday were the landasan [anvil], palo [two-handed stone maul], stone hammer [palo-palo], a pair of tongs [kipit], and an array of bolos for cutting the smoldering metal. A panday usually has in his employ an apprentice called “masaop” who mans the hasohas

[furnace].

On the kind of works commissioned to a panday in those days, Scott wrote, “The most important tool manufactured, repaired, or retempered by the blacksmith was the bolo. Dohong or dayopak was the ordinary one; tuwad, a heavier one for wood-cutting; bako or bantok, one with a curved blade for weeding or cultivating; and pisaw, one with a short blade and long handle to be pressed under the arm or against the ground with the foot to leave both hands free for stripping rattan. The blade had a tang for haft-

ing into the wooden handle, and was held firm with resinous sap and a ring of rattan or metal. The head of the ax (wasay) was also hafted into the handle; it was only about two fingers wide and could be rotated a quarter turn to be used as an adze.”

Traditional blacksmithing is still alive in the Philippines today particularly in the countryside. Their earnings usually comes from people who want a custom made bolo or farmers who want their ploughs hammered back into shape as well as the sales of swords and tools they have made.

Fighting with Paired Weapons:



The ability to fight with paired weapons is a coveted attribute among Filipino martial arts practitioners

An Important Filipino Martial Arts Skill

Of the many styles of Filipino martial arts, the most known for fighting with paired weapons is the Sinawali double sticks fighting style of Pampanga (sometimes called the “Estilo Macabebe”). The name Sinawali came from word “sawali,” a woven split bamboo mats used as walls of nipa huts. The crisscrossing movements of Sinawali weapons fighting mimic the pattern of these mats hence the name.

The high-speed nature of Sinawali drills is good for developing fast reaction. The rapid-fire contact of sticks in these drills will sharpen one’s awareness of motion. It’s like the experience of getting used to driving a car at 90 mph and

then suddenly lowering the speed at 55 mph. Fifty five mph is still fast, but if you’re used to 90 mph, it seems to be a lot slower.

Developing the strength and coordination of both hands is another benefit of Sinawali training. Most of these drills teach the practitioner to relate the movement of the weak hand to that of the strong hand hence promoting ambidexterity. Fighters who possess a very high degree of skill with fighting with paired weapons seem to have hands that function independently of each other (not the weak hand merely relating to the movement of the strong hand). In a fight with paired weapons, the better fighter displays the ability to strike and

defend with either hands at will while the inferior fighter would most probably settle with using the weapon in his weak hand as a shield and utilize the weapon in his strong hand for hitting.

Acquiring ambidexterity in wielding weapons has been the goal of serious fighting men through the ages. The reason for this is that in the battlefield, no matter how good you are, there is always that chance that your strong hand would be injured. If that happens, your survival now lies in the ability of your other hand to use a weapon. With that said, training your weak hand to a functional fighting level cannot be over emphasized.

Fighting with paired weapons demands a very high level of skill. An Escrimador who have not still polished his ability in wielding paired weapons to perfection is better off just using a single weapon in actual combat. Amante Mariñas offers a sound advice on this matter in his book “Pananandata: Dalawang Yantok (Arnis Double Sticks Fighting),” it reads, “Your second yantok [rattan stick] will be a very useful weapon if you are able to coordinate its movements with the movements

of your other yantok. If you are not able to, your second yantok can interfere with the movements of your other yantok. Thus, physically, you will have two weapons. In reality, however, you might have available only a fraction of one yantok.”

In a fight, it is logical to assume that your opponent would lead with either hand hence your first consideration is to deal with the weapon nearest to you. You can take this barrier away with a forceful strike with either of your weapons before inserting the killing blow. In the same book Mariñas said, “Ideally you should not allow the opponent’s second yantok to participate in a fight. If you are not able to close the distance and are not able to gain control of the opponent’s first yantok, you will have to contend with his second yantok. If you fail to stop the opponent’s second yantok, then you will have to deal with his first yantok a second time.”

Dan Inosanto, in his classic book “The Filipino Martial Arts,” offered a useful advice in the practice of paired weapons in relation with the “alive hand,” it reads, “If he was wielding a single weapon, the alive hand should be the one

that didn’t have a weapon. If he was wielding a long and a short weapon, the alive hand should be the one with a shorter weapon. If he was empty-handed or wielding two equal-sized weapons, the alive hand would generally be the one that come into play second.”

Fighting with paired weapons should be practiced in various positions, different terrains and with variable weaponry. Sinawali drills for one can be practiced standing, squatting and even with one player lying down. It is also good training to shadow fight with impromptu weapons on each hand. For example, experience how it feels like to shadow fight a tire iron and a kitchen knife. You’re only limited by your imagination.

The ability to wield a weapon with either hand is a rare ability among escrimadors and those who possessed this talent is highly esteemed among his peers. Inosanto in the same book mentioned that one of the teachers of Leo Giron was capable of this feat, he wrote, “One of his instructors, a man the people called Mr. Delgado, used to travel from camp to camp to fight their best escrimadors. He was good, Giron remembers, and he could fight with either hand.”

The Bolo: *A Filipino Utility Tool and Weapon*

Within farming communities in the Philippines even today, both young and old wear a bolo on their waists. It is amazing to watch the precision of these people as they use their bolos to unhusk a coconut or split a bamboo as if the blade is an extension of their limbs. Even in urban areas, most Filipino households own a bolo because of its excellent utilitarian purpose.

The common distinguishing characteristic of the bolo is its blade that widens and curves towards the tip. With more weight at the end of the blade, chopping becomes forceful and efficient. A bolo has a full tang that makes it a sturdy chopping tool and weapon. The handle of a bolo could be made of hardwood or carabao horn and it may come with or without a guard.

Among Tagalogs, the bolo may be referred to as “itak.”

Being an agricultural country, the bolo is ubiquitous in the lives of Filipinos particularly those living in the countryside. It is an all-purpose tool that can be used in clearing bushes, chopping wood and tilling the soil. And when a self-defense situation arises, the bolo comes in handy as a formidable weapon.

In the Philippines, one can easily buy a bolo either from wet markets or street peddlers. But those who want a high qual-

ity piece could go to a “panday” (blacksmith) and have his bolo custom-made.

The venerable Katipunan and the 1896 Philippine Revolution against Spain would always be remembered with the image of Andres Bonifacio wielding a bolo. Despite the advance military technology of the United States during the Philippine-American War, Filipino bolomen remained to be a force to reckon with.

Orllino Ochosa’s book “Bandoleros: The Outlawed Guerrillas of the Philippine-American War of 1903-1907” made reference to a band of bolomen in Luzon called the “Arma Blanca,” it reads, “Manila’s ‘Arma Blanca,’ that phantom army of bolomen whom General Luna had so much depended upon in his bold attack of Manila at the start of the war with the Americans.”

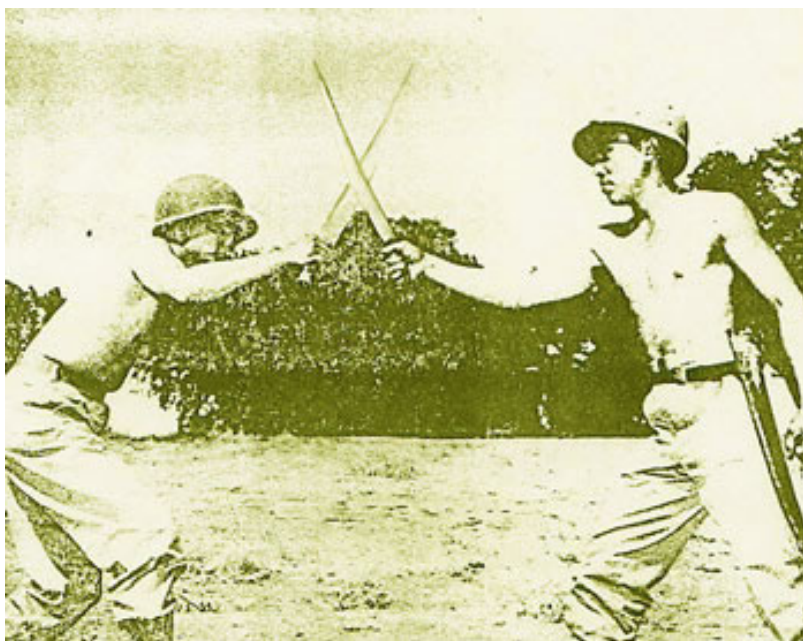
But it was during the Second World War that much documentation had been made on the

exploits of Filipino bolomen.

The 1st Filipino Regiment of the United States Army in the Philippines during World War II holds the distinction of being labeled the original “Bolo Battalion.” Dan Inosanto in his book “The Filipino Martial Arts” mentioned how this fearless band of blade fighters came about, it says, “The young Filipino enlistees were soon disenchanted. In the inimitable way of military services, they were required to conform to the armed forces’ methods of close quarter combat. When they were finally given the chance to demonstrate their native arts, the order was remanded. Their demonstrations included bettering the self-defense bayonet instructors with long leaf-shaped bolo knives and sticks. Thereafter, all platoons of Filipinos were issued bolo knives and they practiced their own arts in basic training.”

Among those bolomen who lived to tell their experiences was the late escrima master Leo Gi-

ron. Giron, who had served as a soldier of the US Army and fought in the jungles of the Philippines during World War II recounted his experiences fighting with a bolo in Mark Wiley’s Book “Filipino Martial Culture,” it says, “You develop a style without a style – chop, chop, chop. One time I got clipped with a bayonet. I blocked the samurai sword coming



Filipino soldiers during WW II practicing bolo techniques

down toward my shoulder, and a rifle bayonet went by my side from another Japanese shoulder. I cut the hip of the bayonet thruster and then the triceps of the one with the sword. After that I just keep charging and fighting the next ones. It's up to the guys behind me to finish the job because there are too many more coming."

On the recognition long overdue for the valiant bolomen of the Japanese occupation, Ambassador Roy A. Cimatú has the following words, "No one can deny the Boloman's contribution to the intelligence backbone of the guerrilla resistance, or his masterful camouflage as meek villager by day, recon patrol by night. Yet, for all his courage and selflessness, the

boloman remains a ghost---doomed to haunt the annals of military history in search of recognition."

In 1998, the martial heritage of the 1st Bolo Battalion was reclaimed after the Philippine Marine Corps adapted as its official Close Quarters Combat/CQC doctrine the Pekiti-Tirsia system of Grand Tuhon Leo Gaje Jr.

An article titled "The Heritage of the Past and the Legacy of the Future" by Timothy D. Waid published in the November 1998 issue of *Citamar* the official publication of the Philippine Marine Corps reads, "In this year of the Republic of the Philippines National Centennial Celebration, 1998, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) reclaims its true martial

heritage with the Philippine Marine Corps Force Reconnaissance Battalion designation as the modern BOLO BATTALION. The Filipino Bolo has been the trademark combat weapon for generations of Filipino warriors and heroes from Datu Lapu Lapu to the founding fathers of the Katipunan and now of the Force Recon Marines."

Mastery of the blade demands that its use become second nature. The Filipinos of the olden days were one with the blade because it is part and parcel of their existence. The bolo, which was the most popular knife at their disposal, was perceived as giver of life (being a farming implement) and a defender of life (being a self-defense weapon).

The Filipino Balisong Knife

In the movies, the Filipino balisong knife was once dubbed "the nunchaku of the 1980s." If the 1970s was the era of the nunchaku (popularized by Bruce Lee in his films), the 1980s belonged to the balisong. Jeff Imada, in his book "The Balisong Manual," published in 1984 wrote, "Backed by top quality, wide exposure, the balisong will undoubtedly rival the nunchaku in popularity for action film sequences. Imada, who is among the most respected stunt choreographer in the United States today, is a student of Dan



A Philippine-made balisong

Inosanto. It was through the effort of Imada and Inosanto that the balisong knife made its debut in Hollywood. Inosanto appeared as a balisong-wielding villain in Burt Reynolds 1981 film "Sharkey's Machine."

Then Came the Tactical Folder

Before Sal Glessner of the knife company SpiderCo designed the tactical folder during the early 1980s, the Filipino balisong was the popular choice among martial artists who want a folding knife that can be deployed instantly with

one hand. In knife jargon, the balisong is considered a non-typical folder.

Among individuals whose primary concern is a knife that can be opened quickly with one hand, the tactical folder became the more popular choice over the balisong. The popularity of the tactical folder is hinged on two primary factors: it can be opened comfortably with one hand via the thumb stud on the blade; and it is very secure and comfortable to carry because of its pocket clip.

Knife with a Flash

But beyond the issue of practicality, there are other reasons why a serious practitioner of knife combat should study the balisong. The first reason is because training with the balisong demands more skill. In their book "Pananandata: The Guide to Balisong Openings," father and son Amante Mariñas Sr. and Amante Mariñas Jr. wrote, "How many ways can you open a switchblade? One. How many ways can you bare the blade of a boot knife? One. Draw it from its scabbard. How many ways can you open a lock back? Two; either with an energetic flick or with a push with the thumb. How many ways can you open a Spanish navaja? One: using both hands and with great difficulty. How many ways can you open a balisong? We have discovered 169 ways."

A simple opening technique of the balisong could rival the speed of opening of either a switchblade or a tactical folder. The two authors wrote that based on their research, the fastest opening of the balisong was clocked at 0.16 seconds. Despite this fact, Mariñas Sr. and Mariñas Jr. cautioned that under combat stress, the

simplest of the balisong openings may seem impossible to complete and there is even a possibility of the user dropping his knife.

While the number and complexity of balisong openings may daunt some would-be balisong owners, the truth is there are three schools of thought on the balisong as explained by Mariñas Sr. and Mariñas Jr. in their book. The two authors wrote, "One school includes those who practice the openings racing against the clock. Another school includes older, wiser men who advocate opening the balisong, deliberately, like peeling a banana. There is yet another school that does not care about it."

The Balisong as a Fighting Knife

The real art of the balisong begins after it was opened.

It should be clear to the student of the balisong that while the fancy openings develop certain combat attributes like reflex and dexterity, these things does not constitute knife fighting. The various opening techniques merely link the gap between the draw and the actual use of the balisong.

The strength of the structure of the balisong is at par if not greater than the locking mechanisms of other folding knives. The two handles that sheathe the blade when the balisong is closed forms a single sturdy handle when the balisong is open.

Hand crafted Philippine balisongs are known for their tips that can pierce a one-peso coin. Coin piercing is the traditional way of testing the strength of a balisong.

Despite the popularity of the tactical folder, I still encounter once in while security profes-

sionals that carry a balisong as a backup weapon. One bodyguard I met in Batangas province (the home of the balisong) carried one as a back up to his 1911 .45 pistol. He preferred a balisong with a simple design explaining that he doesn't want anything that would snag on his clothing when he draw the knife.

A Fine Weapon To Own

The etymology of the name balisong was believed to have originated from "baling sungay," which in the Tagalog dialect means "broken horn." The trademark of traditional Philippine-made balisongs is a handle that has inserts made of carabao horn.

There are currently two types of balisong constructions: sandwich construction and channel construction. The latter, which is a product of modern technology, is characterized by handles that were formed from one piece of material. Sandwich construction, which is the way traditional Philippine balisongs are made involves assembling layers that are pinned and screwed together. Premium native Filipino balisongs have blades that were forge out of discarded giant ball bearings that explain its coin-piercing strength.

The Balisong's Place of Origin

In recent years, there were some debates regarding the true place of origin of the balisong. One faction claims that the balisong really originated in France citing a technical drawing of a balisong that appeared in the book "Le Perret" that was published in 1710. The copy of the book is displayed at The Museum of Thiers, in Thiers, France. Banking on the said

evidence, this faction theorized that the balisong was invented in Europe and eventually came to be used in Spain then brought to the Philippines by the Spaniards.

This hypothesis clearly discounted the possibility that it could be the other way around - the Spaniards picking up the balisong from the Filipinos and bringing the knife to Europe where its design was copied. There are evidences indicating that Filipino seafarers have traveled the world long

before Spain colonized the Philippines. It is interesting to note that the guide of Ferdinand Magellan named Enrique de Malacca was believed to be a Filipino. Completely assuming that the balisong is of European origin is belittling the capabilities of the pre-colonial bladesmiths of the Philippines to produce such a knife with ingenious design.

A good counterargument to this assumption is the fact that the Spaniards were so impressed with

the metallurgical skills of Filipino blacksmiths that they commissioned Panday Pira (1483 to 1576) to open their first artillery foundry in the Philippines. Panday Pira was credited for inventing the lantaka, a portable cannon that could be swiveled at any angle during battle. Historical accounts of foreigners visiting the Philippines through the centuries have also attested that the Mindanao kris equals the temper of the Toledo blade.

Largo Mano and Western Fencing

I took up the study of sport fencing in the early 1990s under Socorro Olivan. Besides being a fencing instructor, Olivan was also a Black Belt Karateka and a champion Judo player. With a couple of years of Arnis-Escrima training behind me, it took some times before I developed finesse in my movements in accordance with the body mechanics of western fencing. I remember Olivan reprimanding me a number of times for nearly breaking the frangible foil blade.

As an Escrimador who favored largo mano style of fighting, my training in western fencing served me well. The largo mano (long hand) style is among the simplest and most potent system of Arnis-Escrima. As its name implies, largo mano is a long-range style utilizing distance, evasion and the sneaky delivery of strikes.

One common thread

evident in western fencing (particularly those employing the foil and the epee) and largo mano is the mental orientation among its players that the tip (the last three inches) of the weapon is the one that inflicts the damage. Largo mano fighters recognize the fact that the stick is first and foremost an impact weapon and it would pay well to utilize its long-range capability. The stick used in largo mano is about 30 inches, considerably longer than common Escrima sticks.

Like in western fencing, accuracy is paramount in largo mano fighting. Hits should land with surgical precision on vital areas. Using the length of the weapon to his advantage, a largo mano fighter avoids stick-to-stick contact during a skirmish and attempts to hit the opponent's weapon hand instead. The fast and economical footwork of western

fencing is very useful in maintaining the optimal fighting range in largo mano. Whenever possible, a largo mano stylist uses footwork and evasive body movements to avoid blows instead of blocking.

Again, like in western fencing, another apparent feature of largo mano is the nearly total absence of the use of the "alive hand" or non-weapon hand. The "alive hand" is used for trapping and disarms in Arnis-Escrima at close quarters. This is understandable since a largo mano fighter, given sufficient room, would always opt to fight long-range. So, if an Escrimador can't reach his opponent with his non-weapon hand, he knows he is within the largo mano range. Given the kind of speed possible with the stick or blade in this range, it is rather foolhardy to try to grab your opponent's weapon hand with your alive hand. In western fencing, the

non-weapon hands often acts as a counterbalance to the sword hand while executing lunging thrusts.

The most renowned master of the largo mano style is the late Leovigildo “Leo” Giron. Giron, along with the late Master Angel Cabales and Master Max Sarmiento holds the distinction of being the very first to openly teach Arnis-Escrima in the United States. Giron had used his art in jungle warfare as a soldier of the US Army in the Philippines during World War II. Using the bolo as his primary weapon, Giron’s largo mano skill proved useful when he walked as the lead man of guerillas patrolling through Philippine forests during that war. His task was to disable Japanese soldiers first with his blade and let those walking behind him finish the job. He was awarded a number of medals for bravery during those guerilla operations.

The influences of western fencing most probably made its way to the native Filipino martial art during the rise of the Ilustrado class during the Spanish colonial period. Ilustrado, which is a Span-

ish word for “erudite” pertains to the middle class or educated Filipinos during that period. A good case in point is the Philippines’ national hero Dr. Jose Rizal who was both an adept in western fencing and Arnis. Rizal taught arnis to young boys during his exile in Dapitan.

Because they have the money to study abroad, members of the Ilustrado class were exposed to the occidental ways of warfare. One contemporary of Rizal who was also known for his fighting prowess and his role in the revolution against Spain was General Antonio Luna. Like Rizal, Luna was also an excellent marksman and swordsman. Rey Resurrection, in an article titled “Wizard in the War” published in “Filipino Heritage,” tells of an interesting facet of Luna’s education, it reads, “In Spain, Luna went into an earnest study of war. He majored in military organization, strategy and tactics. He never intended to take up a soldier’s career [he was originally trained as a pharmacist], but he has the blood of warriors in his

veins – five uncles in his mother’s side were officers in the Spanish Army - and it was not surprising that he followed their footsteps.” Another part of the article says, “As soon as he was allowed to leave Spain he proceeded to Ghent, Belgium, where he took up the study of guerilla warfare with General Leman, who was to become the hero of the Battle of Liege in World War I.”

It was interesting to note that Rizal nearly fought Luna in a duel in Spain because of the latter’s unsavory remarks against his love interest Nellie Boustead. Realizing that the interest of the revolution would be compromised, the duel was aborted when Luna apologized and when the Filipinos in Madrid intervened.

The influence of western swordsmanship was evident in the names of some systems of Filipino martial art. One good example is “estocada,” which was derived from the word “estoc,” a French sword designed for piercing chain mail.



Jose Rizal (right) and Juan Luna (left) practicing fencing in Paris.
Juan Luna is the painter brother of General Antonio Luna

The Cordillera Head Ax

Serving as a tool and weapon, every culture in the world has its version of the ax. In the Philippines, no other ethnic group has given heavy emphasis on the use of the ax in combat than the headhunting highland tribes of Northern Luzon. While headhunting is no longer practiced by these tribes, the head ax is still ubiquitous in the mountainous part of northern Philippines often carried as part of traditional costume and as souvenir sold to tourists.

One of the earliest works, that documented the use of the head ax of the highland tribes of Northern Philippines was published in 1912, titled, "The Head Hunters of Northern Luzon From Ifugao to Kalinga: A Ride Through the Mountains of Northern Luzon With an Appendix on the Independence of the Philippines" by Cornelis De Witt Willcox.

Wilcox, throughout the book noted the omnipresence of the head ax in the northern highlands of the country. On his impression of the weapon, he wrote, "But the finest thing of all was the head-ax, a beautiful and cruel-looking weapon, the head having on one side an edge curving back toward the shaft, and on the other a point. To keep the weapon from slipping out of the hand, a stud is left in the hard wood shaft, about two-thirds of the way from the head, the shaft itself being protected by a steel sheathing half way down; the remainder being ornamented with decorative brass plates and strips, and the end shod in a ferrule of silver. The top of the ax is not straight, but curved, both edge and point taking, as it were,



Two types of Cordillera head axes (left),
the R&D Sayoc/Winkler Fighting Tomahawk (right)

their origin in this curve; the edge is formed by a double chamfer, the ax-blade being of uniform thickness. All together, this weapon is perhaps more original and characteristic than any other native to the Philippine Archipelago. With it goes the Kalinga shield of soft wood, made in one piece, with the usual three horns or projections at the top and two at the bottom. These projections, however, are cylindrical, and the outside ones are continued down the edge of the shield and so form ribs. In the ordinary Igorot shield the horns are flat, merely prolonging the surface of the shield, or else presenting only a very small relief. As usual, a lacing of bejuco across top and bottom protects the shield against a separation in the event of an unlucky stroke splitting it in two."

Combat Use

The movement dynamics of fighting with an ax is quite different from fighting with a straight stick or blade. The head-heavy balance of an ax limits the possibility of rapid multi-directional attack. Once launched, it is very difficult to redirect a strike because of the momentum generated by the weight concentrated at the

end of the weapon. This could also lead to over commitment and slow recovery time exposing the user to fast counter attacks.

The head-heavy balance of an ax though offers one advantage in combat and that is it can generate tremendous force that could crash through defenses. Because of its heavy mass, single blow of an ax possesses enough stopping power to incapacitate even a large opponent. Another advantage of the short ax is it could also function in the projectile range as it can be hurled at an opponent.

All the angles of attack of the Filipino martial arts could be used when fighting with a short ax. In addition, the ax head could be used for hooking and trapping your opponent's weapon, hands or legs. The ax user could still fight with his weapon in trapping and grappling range by choking up on the shaft putting his hand just below the ax head. With this accomplished, he can now use the ax blade to slash, rip or punch.

The design of the Cordillera head ax makes it more dangerous for the user. Unlike its common counterparts with a flat poll, the Cordillera head ax has a wicked protrusion on its butt, which

could severely injure the user at the slightest miscalculation. This protrusion has a gruesome purpose for the headhunting tribes of the olden days. After beheading his victim, the warrior would drive this protrusion into the ground, hold the shaft with his feet and clean the scalp by scraping it on the ax blade.

Influence on modern tactical blades

The influence of the design of Cordillera head ax has found its way in modern tactical blades specifically the R&D Sayoc / Winkler Fighting Tomahawk, produced for

the U.S. Naval Special Warfare/Teams. A part of the article titled "An Effective Force Multiplier," by Mike Haskew, published in Blade Magazine reads, "R&D Tomahawk combines elements of the best such weapons from around the world, including South-east Asian headhunter axes and Nordic or European combat axes." Responsible for the Filipino input was Rafael Kayanan, a master level instructor of Sayoc Kali and head of its tomahawk curriculum. A quote from Kayanan in the article reads, "This hawk is much

lighter than many tactical hawks, coming in at approximately 1.5 pounds, at 13 inches in length, it can be carried along without being too cumbersome. The full tang is milled to a taper and also allows the user to use the hawk as a blunt-force weapon." A man of multifaceted talents, Kayanan first hugged the limelight as part of the team that choreographed the Filipino martial art fight scene of the movie "The Hunted," starring Tommy Lee Jones and Benicio del Toro. He is also a renowned comic book artist and concept designer.

Filipino Flexible Weapons

While the stick and the blade are the most popular weapons of the Filipino martial arts, the truth is it also includes training in projectile and flexible weapons. This article will focus on Filipino flexible weapons.

Though flexible weapons can be wielded using the basic angles of attacks of the stick and blade, they have distinct characteristics from other type of weapons. In terms of advantage, a flexible weapon can bend over a block and therefore can still hit the defender. Its ability to loop around a limb or weapon could be utilized to immobilize an opponent or to destroy his balance.

The greatest disadvantage

of a flexible weapon compared to a rigid weapon is that every hit requires full commitment. Also, it cannot be used in delivering rapid retracting strikes.

Only a few systems of Filipino martial art teach flexible weapons, which makes authentic instruction on the subject really hard to find.

The most popular flexible weapon associated with the Filipino martial art is the latigo or bullwhip. A renowned master of the latigo is the late Eustaquio "Snookie" Sanchez of Waipahu, Hawaii. Sanchez's prowess with the latigo involved extinguishing several candles with his whip while blindfolded. Some of the

well-known Filipino martial art systems that include latigo training are Pananandata, Pambuan Arnis, Sayoc Kali and Dekiti Tirsia.

A variation of the latigo though rarely seen outside of the Philippines is the buntot page or stingray tail. The buntot page is a vicious weapon and Filipinos believe that the wound inflicted by it is very hard to heal. Such belief may be medically valid because the tail of a live stingray possesses two venom-containing grooves that could inject a protein-based toxin on a wound. Another Filipino belief about the buntot page is that it is an effective weapon against the aswang - a creature of the night that feeds on human flesh particu-

larly unborn babies.

Another flexible weapon that Filipinos use is the simple chain. Calling the weapon “De Cadena,” Dan Inosanto posed with a chain in his classic book “The Filipino Martial Arts.” Unlike the whip, snapping strikes are not possible with the chain because of its weight. While it is only a later ad-



dition to the array of Filipino martial art weapons, the tabak toyok or nunchaku is now adapted in some Filipino martial art systems. The inclusion of tabak toyok (simply known as “tsako” in the Philippines) among Filipino martial art weapons happened through the influence of Inosanto. It is now a well-known fact that he introduced the nunchaku to the legendary Bruce Lee who popularized its use

in his movies.

One system of Filipino martial art offering a rich curriculum on the combative use of the rope is Dugukan. Ned Nepangue, in his article “The Dugukan System of Martial Arts (Rapid Journal Vo. 9 No.2) explained that “dugukan” is a Cebuano term for skeleton or framework. On the kind of weapons used in the system, he wrote, “The armed training includes the use of the olisi sticks, the alho pestles, daggers, pinuti blades, wasay axes, and the use of pisi or rope.” Nepangue narrated that Dugukan was taught by David Gaverola a.k.a. Gabino Gaverola of Candabong, Argao, Cebu. “Tatay [father] David was considered a master of indigenous Cebuano martial arts, healing arts and esoteric arts. He studied under Maximino Pedro, who was known in his skill in using the ax and ground fighting. Maximino Pedro in turn was a student of General Adriano de la Concepcion,” he wrote.

The use of the sarong, a piece of cloth wrapped around the waist and handkerchief as weapons are taught in some Filipino martial art systems. These two common objects can be utilized to distract, immobilize or strangle an opponent. The use of the sarong is found in Filipino martial art systems with strong silat influence. The late Lameco founder Edgar

Sulite taught the extensive use of the handkerchief as a self-defense tool.

The yo-yo in the old Philippines was employed as weapon though such skill is now long lost. The Philippines’ National Hero Dr. Jose Rizal was a skilled practitioner of the yo-yo as a weapon. In their book “Jose Rizal: Life Works and Writings of a Genius, Writer, Scientist, and National Hero,” Gerogorio F. Zaide and Sonia M. Zaide wrote of how Rizal demonstrated his skill with the yo-yo aboard a ship during his trans-Atlantic voyage from New York to Liverpool, it reads, “Rizal entertained the American and European passengers with his marvelous skill with the yo-yo as an offensive weapon. The yo-yo is a small wooden disc attached to a string from the finger. It is used by Filipino children as a toy. But Rizal manipulated it as a weapon of offense, to the great amazement of the foreigners.”

The Filipinos’ use of the yo-yo as a weapon was also mentioned in Mary Bellis’ article “The History of the Yo-Yo,” she wrote, “In the Philippines, the yoyo was used as a weapon for over 400 hundred years. Their version was large with sharp edges and studs and attached to thick twenty-foot ropes for flinging at enemies or prey.”

Pragmatism in the Practice of the Filipino Martial Arts

With few exceptions, stick fights with unpadded sticks without the aid of helmet and armor do not last very long. Its either one fighter surrendered or suffered a knock out or the referee stopped the match because of the severity of the injury. This is the norm that the Escrimadors of yore have to live with hence in the old Philippines; it is not common for Escrima and Arnis men to practice in seclusion for the fear of being challenged.

In his book "The Filipino Martial Arts," Dan Inosanto describes how a juego todo (all-out stick fighting match) was conducted as per the accounts of the late death match Master Floro Villabrille, it reads, "They usually used the stick in the right hand and punched with the left hand. The use of the elbow, knee and head were common at close range combat. Combat grappling like techniques (standing or on the ground) were applied. These included throws, trips, sweeps, take downs, chokes, strangulation, dislocations and locks on fingers, wrists, elbows, shoulders ankles and knees. The feet were used for kicking at low level. It was a brutal art and only the swiftest, the strongest and the most courageous survived or remained in practice. The rounds were two minutes with one minute rests in between."

Inosanto's book also has a graphic description on the kind of injury a fighter can sustain from such matches. In a match fought by the late Angel Cabales, it says, "Stick fights never last very long and this one ended when Cabales broke open the man's knuckle. The blow lacerated an artery and the blood pumping out of the man's

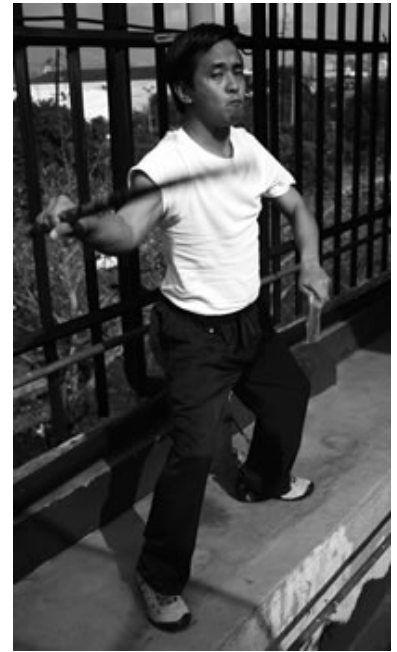
hand kept him from continuing."

The breed of Escrimadors who have experienced the brutal nature of juego todo and the battlefield were forced to choose practical over fancy techniques, for survival not aesthetics is the primary concern in actual combat.

The problem with martial arts that developed during peaceful times is that they lacked the necessary pressure testing. In times of war, a fighter is forced to pick techniques that only work for real. In peaceful times, a martial artist possesses the luxury to tinker with creativity in formulating fighting techniques but whether these techniques will work for real is another story.

The basics of the Filipino martial arts were designed to be conveyed easily and learned fast. The reason for this is because in pre-colonial times when an invasion of a barangay by another barangay is impending, it is a must that all the able-bodied men be trained in the rudiments of fighting quickly.

This pragmatic nature of the Filipino martial art was again put to actual use during the Japanese invasion of the Philippines in World War II, the late Filipino martial art scholar Pedro Reyes, expounding on the virtues of Cinco Tiros, a style of arnis-escrima that utilizes only five strikes (hence the name) wrote, "Because it has proven itself in actual fights, Cinco Tiros remains as one of the leading styles in Northern Luzon. My teacher in Cinco Tiros, Ising Valera, was a guerilla leader in World War II and he taught Cinco Tiros to his soldiers to use against the samurai [Japanese katana];



they used it successfully during hand-to-hand fighting with the Japanese, he said. (Rapid Journal Vol.12 No.4)"

Masters who have acquired their skills the traditional way were also noted for their capability of teaching functional fighting skills in the quickest way possible. Ireneo Olavides, heir to the late legendary juego todo champion Grandmaster Jose D. Caballero and founder of Eskrima De Campo JDC-IO told me that if he were to impart only one technique to a student, this would be the rebounding horizontal backhand blow, which is the first strike in his system. Olavides attested that this efficient technique could take a fight out of an opponent if executed correctly. He also told me that the X-pattern of escrima is sufficient for real fighting.

Olavides' statement reminds me of the words of another Filipino martial art legend, Juanito "Johnny" La Coste. In an interview published in Inosanto's "The Filipino Martial Arts," he said, "You learn first two numbers, you fight

any style and beat him.” Another line from him from the same book says, “One month I teach you. You fight okay, any style.”

The key to developing a functional martial art is the realization that the beauty of movements and the number of techniques a

practitioner knows is not really the indicator of success. An important factor often overlooked by many martial artists is the human body’s natural reaction to threat. It has been proven scientifically time and again that when a person is confronted with a near-panic situation,

the first thing that goes out of the window were fine motor skills. With that established, combative moves should be based on gross motor skills (simple movements) and not fine motor skills (complicated movements).

Lessons of Strategy from the Battle of Mactan

The Battle of Mactan on April 27, 1521, when Lapu-Lapu and his men killed Ferdinand Magellan was looked upon by many enthusiasts of the Filipino martial arts as a landmark where native fighting skills triumphed over Occidental method of warfare.

The most credible account of what transpired during the Battle of Mactan was the chronicles of Antonio Pigafetta, an Italian knight and diarist who traveled with Magellan and recorded the history of his voyage.

In that encounter, it is evident that the Spaniards possessed the advantage of superior military technology over the natives. But the over confidence they put on the formidability of their armament cost them a victory.

It is good to examine the weapons of both sides as per the records of Pigafetta. The quotes in this article were taken from the English translation of Pigafetta’s

chronicles titled, “Pigafetta’s Account (1521) Part II, published in “1898: The Shaping of Philippine History (Vol. II No. 17)”

Lapu-Lapu and his men were armed with the following weapons: cutlasses (kampilan), wooden shield, stones as projectiles, bow and arrow, spears with metal points and bamboo lances. On the nature of the latter, Pigafetta wrote, “They replied that if we had lances they had lances of bamboo and stakes hardened with fire.”

Clad in armor, Magellan and his men were armed with muskets, crossbows, lances, swords and mortars.

Another important facet of this battle is the size of contingents from both sides. On the number of the Spanish soldiers, Pigafetta wrote, “At midnight, sixty men of ours set out armed with sorselets and helmets, together with the Christian king, the prince, some of

the chief men, and twenty or thirty balanguias.” It is good to note that while the sixty Spanish soldiers were accompanied by an army of native warriors friendly to them, this contingent did not participated in the fight as Pigafetta commented after the battle, “The Christian king would have aided us, but the captain charged him before we landed not to leave his balanghai [boat], but to stay to see how we fought.”

On the size of Lapu-Lapu’s native army, Pigafetta wrote, “When we reached land, those men had formed in three divisions to the number of more than one thousand five hundred persons.”

Besides superiority in number, Lapu-Lapu’s army won the Battle of Mactan by making the terrain work against their enemies’ more powerful weaponry. He and his army managed to goad the Spaniards to wade into the waters where their heavy armor

would compromise their mobility. This is manifested in the following lines that Pigafetta wrote, “So we continued to retire for more than a good crossbow flight from the shore always fighting up to our knees in the water. The natives continued to pursue us, and picking up the same spear four or six times, hurled it at us again and again.”

The natives know where to hit focusing on the parts unprotected by armor, “The natives shot only at our legs, for the latter were bare; and so many were the spears and stones that they hurled at us, that we could offer no resistance,” Pigafetta said.

The Spaniards with all their superior military technology were pinned to a location where their armaments could not inflict damage on the natives or could provide them protection, “The musketeers and crossbowmen shot from a distance for about half-hour, but uselessly; for the shots only passed through the shields which were made of thin wood and the arms [of the bearers],” wrote Pigafetta, adding, “The mortars in the boats could not aid us as they were too far away.”

It was in this compromised position that the natives rain projectiles on them, “They shot so many arrows at us and hurled so many bamboo spears (some of them tipped with iron) at the captain-general, besides painted stakes hardened with fire stones, and mud, that we could scarcely defend ourselves.” Pigafetta wrote that Magellan was shot with a poisoned arrow on the right leg before Lapu-Lapu and his men ganged up on him for the kill. Pigafetta’s description of Magellan’s death portrayed the man as a valiant warrior who stood his



A colonial map of the Philippines
(Source: Photographic History of the Spanish-American War, Map IV)

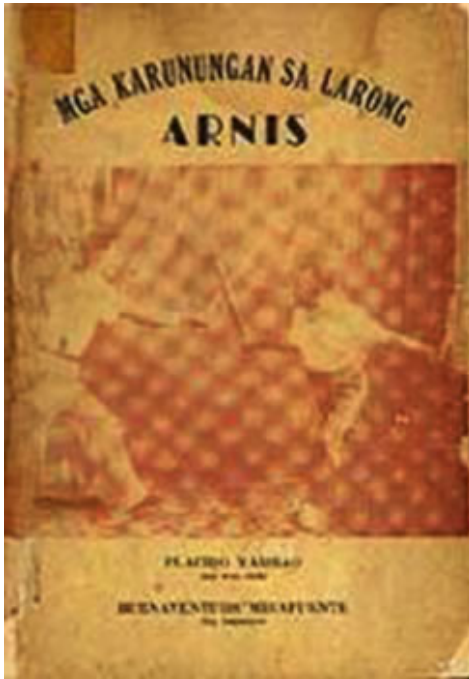
ground in battle to the very end, he wrote, “An Indian hurled a bamboo spear into the captain’s face, but the latter immediately killed him with his lance, which he left in the Indian’s body. Then trying to lay hand on his sword, he could draw it out but halfway, because he had been wounded in the arm with a bamboo spear. When the native saw that, they all hurled themselves upon him. One of them wounded him on the left leg with a large cutlass, which resembles a

scimitar, only larger. That caused the captain to fall face downward, when immediately they rushed him with iron and bamboo spears and with their cutlasses, until they killed our mirror, our light, our comfort, and our true guide.”

In honor of the valiant native chief, a number of Filipino martial art styles were named after Lapu-Lapu. The most prominent among these is the Lapulapu Arnis Afficionados founded by the late Jose Viñas.

Revisiting a Classic: “*Mga Karunungan sa Larong Arnis*”

By Placido Yambao and Buenaventura Mirafuente



Written in archaic Tagalog, “*Mga Karunungan sa Larong Arnis*” [A Body of Knowledge in the Sport of Arnis] by Placido Yambao and Buenaventura Mirafuente published by the University of the Philippines Press in 1957 is the first definitive book on Arnis. This manual became the historical reference of many books and articles on the Filipino martial arts circulated up to the late 1980s.

“*Mga Karunungan sa Larong Arnis*” exerted profound influence on some practitioners of the Filipino martial art. Professor Amante Mariñas of Pananandata admits being greatly influenced by the book. A part of a feature on Mariñas in Mark Wiley’s “Filipino Martial Culture” reads, “An important influence in Mariñas’ study of arnis was his introduction in the 1960s to Placido Yambao’s book, *Mga Karunungan sa Larong Arnis*. In fact, Mariñas had already read the book prior to meeting his next Arnis instructor Porferio Lanada.” On the specific influence of the

book on Mariñas’ style of Arnis, Wiley wrote, “Mariñas’ yantok at daga style was greatly influenced by Placido Yambao’s system, which he studied by way of the latter’s book for more than twenty-five years.”

Besides expounding on the technical aspect of arnis Yambao and Mirafuente’s book offers a glimpse on how Arnis was practiced in Manila during the 1950s.

One Arnis organization constantly mentioned in the book was Kapisanang Dunong at Lakas (Tabak ni Bonifacio, 1946). The name literally translates “Brotherhood of Knowledge and Strength.” It was most probably founded in honor of the Supremo of the Katipunan Andres Bonifacio, (“Tabak ni Bonifacio” means Bonifacio’s Bolo). Yambao was one of the founders of the organization and its president from 1934 to 1938. In addition to these credentials it was also mentioned that he holds a teaching diploma in Arnis awarded by the Magtanggol Sporting Club headed by a certain Joaquin Galang. Mirafuente on the other hand was a one-time president of the committee of teachers of the Kapisanang Dunong at Lakas.

It is evident in the two writers’ accounts that Arnis contests were popular in Manila during that time mentioning that stick-fighting bouts were held at the Olympic Coliseum. The Olympic Coliseum mentioned by Yambao and Mirafuente pertains to the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex in Manila then the first multi-purpose stadium in Asia. Antonio de las Alas, which was the Secretary

of Public Works, built it during the 1930s. The structure was to become the site of the 1934 Far East Olympics, 1954 Asian Games and the 1981, 1991 and 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

The two authors didn’t described what type of equipments were used in Arnis contests in Manila in the 1950s but considering that Escrima death matches was legal until 1948 (the year when Grandmaster Floro Vilabrille fought his last bout), it could be surmised that contact was hard and the protection minimal.

The two authors though gave a detailed description on what type of weapons is to be used in following the instructions in their manual. The mode of Arnis practice taught in Yambao and Mirafuente’s book is sword and dagger, called “tabak at balaraw” in Tagalog. The recommended measurement that they gave is 32-inches for the sword and 12-inches for the dagger. Yambao and Mirafuente emphasized that since the primary goal of the study is just health and fitness, only replicas and not real weapons should be used. The players demonstrating the techniques in the book wear no distinct arnis uniforms only ordinary shirts and trousers as well as high-cut Elpo shoes, the Philippine equivalent of Chuck Taylor shoes in the 1950s.

It is interesting to note that there was already a formal initiative to integrate Arnis into the education system during the 1950s. It was mentioned in the book that Mirafuente, with the help of Dr. Marciano Santos, a councilor from Tondo and other concerned indi-

viduals filed a formal request to the city government of Manila on April 29, 1954 for arnis to be taught in all high schools in Manila. The authors wrote that the request was approved on August 6, 1954.

The book also mentions Yambao's interview with Antonio A. Maceda, then superintendent of the City High School of Manila. In the interview, Maceda stressed the need for Arnis to be taught in schools and for it to be declared as a national game. Maceda argued

that if the Philippines' native dances were taught in schools then why not Arnis? Besides the addition of Arnis to the academic curriculum, he also suggested that it should also be a part of military training. He even cited the examples of Europe and America where galleries of arms were built to preserve the tradition of the art of self-defense.

The teaching of Arnis in all the schools of the Philippines is now mandatory because of the enactment of the Arnis Bill (au-

thored by Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri) into a law. It has been a long journey from the time Jose Rizal included Arnis into the curriculum he's teaching to the children of Dapitan until now that it was finally declared the Philippines' national martial art and sport.

The last remaining copy of "Mga Karunungan sa Larong Arnis" is in the possession of the National Library at Teodoro M. Kalaw St. in Manila.

Traditional Remedies for Filipino Martial Arts Injuries

Training in the Filipino martial arts employs bladed and impact weapons and with it comes the possibility of injuries. The latter was very prevalent in the olden days when dueling was a norm among Escrimadores. This article is about traditional Filipino remedies for such injuries. The methods of treatments discussed in this article are for information purposes only presented within the context of Philippine culture and traditions. Any individual who intends to employ them for actual use should first consult a medical professional.

Filipino martial arts weapons generally produced three types of injuries namely wounds, bruises and contusions.

The general term for skin and flesh wounds in Filipino is "sugat," for bruises "pasa" and for contusions "bukol." The first is caused by contact with a sharp object while the last two results from

a hit of a blunt instrument.

There are basically two ways to inflict trauma with a knife, it's either to slash (creating a cut) or to thrust (creating a puncture wound).

Felipe Landa Jocano, the Philippines' foremost anthropologist in his award-winning book "Folk Medicine in a Philippine Municipality," elaborates on the nature of wounds based on his research on traditional Filipino healers, he wrote, "Sugat caused by sharp blades, made either of wood stone or metal, are known as taga or hiwa. Taga are cuts or incisions inflicted on the skin by big instruments like bolos, knives, or daggers. Hiwa are cuts inflicted by smaller instruments like pen knives, shaving blades or broken glasses. Characteristically, taga are bigger and



deeper; the incisions are vertical – that is, crosswise through the skin and the flesh. Hiwa are smaller; the incisions horizontal – that is the cuts follow lengthwise the layer of the skin and the flesh. Because of these characteristics, the two terms are often interchanged and

the inflicting instruments becomes of secondary importance in the process of identifying the wound. Sugat through punctures are known as saksak, deep piercing wounds made with pointed instruments or objects.”

Mayana, bayabas [guava] and bawang [garlic] are three medicinal plants commonly used by traditional Filipino healers to treat wounds. Mayana (scientific name: *Coeus blumei* Benth), which is cultivated for ornamental purposes is administered to stop minor bleeding of wounds and to heal bruises and sprains. For treatment, mayana leaves are crushed and applied directly on the wound. In case of bruises, the crushed leaves are secured on the injured part with a bandage and are replaced three times daily.

The young leaves of a bayabas tree (scientific name: *Psidium Guajava*) are widely used in the Philippines for cleaning and treating wounds. For cleaning wounds, the leaves are boiled in water for a few minutes. The liquid is allowed to cool down and is applied generously on the wound while still lukewarm. Guava leaves can also be pounded

and applied directly on the wound. This medicinal plant is heavily used by Filipinos to hasten the healing of circumcision wounds.

Ubiquitous in Filipino kitchens, bawang (scientific name: *Allium sativum*), is the most important ingredient of adobo the Philippines’ most popular dish. Several scientific studies in the West have already proven the antiseptic properties of garlic. To disinfect wounds, garlic cloves are crushed and the juice applied directly on the wound. Stories abound of how soldiers during World War II used garlic to heal wounds and prevent the onset of gangrene.

Written during the late 1960s and early 1970s, Jocano in his book mentioned a type of healer called “tigagamot ng taga,” whose specialty was exclusively the treatment of hack wounds, a part of his book reads, “This specialists are skillful in stopping hemorrhage and profuse bleeding. One well-known specialist in the lakeshore area was a woman who claimed, when we interviewed her, that her treatment consists mainly of pangungusap (saying prayers). “I do not use medicine,” she said.

Bukol resulting from hits of a blunt weapon usually involves swelling of tissues and skin discoloration ranging from reddish blue at the center of the puffed area to ash gray around it. Pain from this injury can be reduced by administering pounded leaves of yerba buena (scientific name: *Clinopodium Douglasii*), commonly known as peppermint on the affected area. Yerba buena has long been known to possess analgesic properties.

Jocano’s book even contained a liniment formula, which may prove useful in reducing muscle soreness from hard escrima training, it says, “For simple muscular pains only, the following medication is used: one tablespoon of black pepper, two tablespoons of salt, a quantity of garlic, and one cup of coconut oil. The garlic is pounded, mixed with pepper and salt, and heated on a frying pan. Coconut oil is poured into the mixture as soon as it is hot. The resulting paste is allowed to cool a little and is used, while still warm, to massage the aching body. After this is done, the patient is wrapped in a blanket and instructed to go to sleep.”

The Filipino Martial Art in Entertainment and Cinema

The dynamic movements of the Filipino martial arts offer great potential for theatrical and cinematic purposes.

The late Filipino martial art scholar Pedro Reyes wrote of how the Filipino martial art were introduced as a component of entertainment, he said, "Next the Spanish friars introduced the komedya [stage play] and asked the Arnisadores to choreograph the mock battles. Arnis masters responded by creating a new style or branch of Arnis, exhibition or theatrical arnis. Present day masters who coach cinematic actors are heirs to this branch." (Rapid Journal Vol. 4 No. 1).

It is interesting to note that Reyes' statement that the Spaniards commissioned the arnis masters of old to choreograph the fight scenes of the komedya contradicts the long-standing premise that the Filipinos of yore hid their practice in the guise of dances or public performances after the Spanish government banned the Filipino martial art.

In another article (Classifying Arnis, Rapid Vol. 5 No. 2), Reyes described the characteristic of this unique branch of Filipino martial art, he wrote, "If he is showing off, he is doing 'Arnis entablado,' or exhibition Arnis ('entablado' is a Spanish word for 'stage'). Because he has to project to an audience that may be some way off, he exaggerates his movements, engages in acrobatics and favors spectacular techniques."

The introduction of cinema in the Philippines by the coming of the Americans at the turn of the 20th century resulted in a steady decline of the popularity of stage

plays like the komedya, moro-moro and sarsuela. Today, these traditional art forms are still seen during fiestas in the provinces and are being revived by government agencies like the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

While the komedya, moro-moro and sarsuela were commonly identified with Luzon and the Visayas, the Filipino Muslims of Mindanao have grafted martial arts in their performing arts too. In 2007, I did a news coverage of an art exhibition of former Moro rebels wherein one painting caught my attention. The piece depicted the traditional Tausug dance called "Pangalay." The movements of Pangalay, a posted note explained, also come in handy as a form of self-defense for Tausug women. When used for combative purposes, the movements of the Pangalay are called Langka Budjang, which has a martial connotation.

Dan Inosanto is the undisputed pioneer of using the Filipino martial art in stunt works in the movies. His demonstra-

tion of the Filipino martial art in Bruce Lee's last film "The Game of Death" gave tremendous boost to the popularity of the Filipino martial art worldwide. Inosanto and his student Jeff Imada (a top Hollywood stuntman and stunt choreographer) were responsible in showcasing to the world the cinematic potential of the Filipino balisong knife. Inosanto taught actor Ron Maxx how to use the balisong in the Jackie Chan film "The Big Brawl" in 1980. He used the balisong in his appearance in the movie "Sharkey's Machine" starring Burt Reynolds in 1981. Imada on the other hand, demonstrated the balisong and the collapsible steel baton in the 1986 movie "Big Trouble in Little China. Through the efforts of Inosanto and Imada, the balisong was later dubbed "The nunchaku of the 80s." In his book "Absorb What is Useful," Inosanto wrote this insight on fight choreography, "The most difficult part about choreographing a fight scene is the compromise between what is practical and what is theatrical - without getting too hokey. You want to show realism, but it might not be theatrical enough."

Inspired by the inclusion of the Filipino martial art in Lee's "Game of Death," a number of Filipino movies featured Arnis-Esgrima during the 1970s and 1980s. The most prominent of these were the ones starring the late Modern Arnis exponent Roland Dantes. Dantes holds the distinction of starring in the first full-length movie about Arnis dubbed "Arnis: The Sticks of Death," which was released in 1984. Besides his expertise in Arnis, Dantes was also a world-class champion body-



Dan Inosanto in Bruce Lee's last film "Game of Death"

builder who won the title of Mr. Philippines five times from 1969 to 1980. He also placed in international contests like the Mr. World and Mr. Universe.

In 1986, another full-length movie on arnis-escrima was released in the Philippines titled “Kamagong,” starring Juan Carlos Bonnin and Lito Lapid (now a senator). The most recent local film on the Filipino martial art was “Arnis: The Lost Art,” released in 2004 and starring Ronnie Ricketts and Bruce Ricketts. The former is the brother while the latter is the son of renowned martial arts Master Christopher Ricketts of the Bakbakan Group. Christopher Ricketts was also a senior student of the late Antonio “Tatang” Ilus-

trismo.

Hollywood continues to notice the cinematic potential of the Filipino martial art. Among the most notable movies of recent years that featured the Filipino martial art are: “Out for Justice” starring Steven Seagal in 1991; “The Hunted” starring Tommy Lee Jones and Benicio del Toro in 2003; and “The Bourne Supremacy” starring Matt Damon in 2004.

“Out for Justice” contains a dynamic fight scene where Seagal and Inosanto engage in a sinawali [double sticks] fight using pool cues. “The Hunted” meanwhile showcases the splendid knife fighting choreography of Thomas Kier and Rafael Kayanan, both senior instructors of Sayoc Kali. Kay-

anan, a professional illustrator and concept designer for comic books prepared a meticulous storyboard of the film’s knife fight sequences. The Filipino martial arts use of found objects as impromptu weaponry was displayed in “The Bourne Supremacy.”

By the enthusiastic response of moviegoers around the world, it is evident that more films are bound to feature the unique flavor of Filipino martial art choreography. At the time of this writing, it was reported that the old tandem of Inosanto and Imada choreographed exciting fight scenes for the new Denzel Washington movie “The Book of Eli.”



www.FMAPulse.com

FMAPulse.com is an exciting new website dedicated to the Filipino martial arts. It is the mission of the FMA Pulse to help promote, educate and serve as a resource for the current and new generation of FMA enthusiasts.

The team at FMAPulse.com is presenting Filipino martial arts to the world via the internet using Web 2.0 technology. Users can interact with one another in a setting much like Myspace or Facebook, only that we are focused primarily on the Filipino martial arts. This on-line community will give users around the world the ability to share, learn, teach and stay current with what's going on in the world of the Filipino martial arts.

Not only will this online social network cater to practicing Filipino martial arts students and instructors, but also to anyone interested in learning about the Filipino martial arts and culture. Aside from connecting people together, FMAPulse.com will be offering viewers their own personal blog, articles, upcoming Filipino martial arts events and monthly video or audio pod-casts of different Filipino martial arts instructors and their respective styles. This will give viewers a chance to get to know these leading Filipino martial arts instructors and their styles on a more in-depth level.

We at FMAPulse.com invite you to participate, share your views and ideas so we can all unite to help further promote the Filipino martial arts in a positive way across the globe.

Sincerely,

The FMA Pulse Team

When we first decided on creating a website to help promote the Filipino martial arts, one of the pressing issues we encountered on the Internet was the lack of online content for the Filipino martial arts. Most of the existing Internet content was mainly the different Filipino martial arts systems. While this information is very important, we also wanted to find content on other aspects of the Filipino martial arts, such as the cultural and historical aspects.


In order to help solve this problem, we wanted to find someone who was a professional writer, and more importantly a practitioner of the Filipino martial arts.

While searching for this writer, we stumbled upon some articles relating to the Filipino Martial Arts on the Manila Times website. The Manila Times is the oldest circulated newspaper in the Philippines which has a weekly martial arts Sunday column called "Martial Talk". The author of that column is Perry Gil S. Mallari.

When we contacted Perry and told him what FMA Pulse was about we were excited to hear that he had a similar vision. This vision is to help spread and propagate the Filipino Martial Arts and to help elevate Filipino martial arts and its pioneering founders and teachers to worldwide status and recognition. It was just common sense for Perry and FMA Pulse to form a relationship. You can read Perry's writings by visiting our website.

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