

Filipino Martial Arts

F M A D I G E S T
C O L U M N S

Digest

Special Issue
2009

 mandirigma.org

FMA Sunday School

DINUGUAN FOR BRUNCH

FMAF
The Filipino Martial Arts Forum



FMA Educational Depot

Publisher
Steven K. Dowd

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Filipino Martial Arts Digest is published and distributed by: FMA Digest
1297 Eider Circle
Fallon, Nevada 89406
Visit us on the World Wide Web: www.fmadigest.com

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.

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

From the Publishers Desk

Kumusta

A part of the FMA Digest which the FMA Digest believes to be an important part of every regular issue was the FMA-Column. In this section the FMA Digest wanted to continually bring to the reader something of the history, training, and personal thoughts or what was going on in the Filipino martial arts. The first FMA-Column that the FMA Digest was able to establish was in Volume 3 No. 2. And that was Mandirigma.org, which was a research Organization dedicated to cultural awareness.

This was brought to you the reader by: Guro Hospecio "Bud" Balani, Guro Arnold Noche and Guro Arturo "Dino" Flores. Their focus included preserving and promoting the warrior arts of the Philippines commonly known as Kali, Eskrima and Arnis. The warrior arts are one of the most important aspects of any society because its very nature is to defend and preserve the culture it originated from. Thus, mandirigma.org was also involved in researching the culture of the Philippines in issues from ancient to the current. The primary objective of mandirigma.org was to do its part in keeping alive ancient knowledge and give honor to the sacrifices made by previous generations. As of this writing the website of Mandirigma.org has just its main page with their banner and contact information: 5111 Mt. Royal, Los Angeles, CA 90041, (323) 258-4777 **Email:** info@mandirigma.org.

Next was added the FMA Sunday School which was fashioned after SEGUIDA a newsletter put out by Master Jon Escudero on his website "littlebadboy.net" and is no longer up and functional.

Master Escudero's FMA-Column was all about you, him and all us practitioners and enthusiasts of the Filipino martial arts. Maybe a little bit of something on the more personal level. "We martial artists are people too, contrary to popular belief". I guess he wanted it to be like a journey. A journey inside his experiences... Some of them may have been similar, different, parallel or opposite, but then again it's an experience.

After just a couple FMA-Column's Master Escudero could not be reached and it was found that he had relocated to the Middle East and was busy establishing himself and Lightning Scientific Arnis.

In fact the FMA Digest while visiting the Philippines in 2007 was invited and attended the Birthday celebration of Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema on March 18, 2007, at UP Diliman Vanguard, DMST Complex. It was an honor to meet the instructors and practitioners of Lightning Scientific Arnis and to meet the daughter of Grandmaster Lema Mrs. Patty Lema Caballero. And it was that the event was the last column of FMA Sunday School and the FMA Digest had to write it, hoping to get a hold of Master Escudero before the next issue. But the FMA Digest was not able to and as said before finally the FMA Digest found out Master Escudero had relocated and The FMA Digest could not get hold of him.

Master Escudero has sent a couple articles since, that have been in the FMA Digest and also contributed a couple events that he has had where he is.

Still wanting another FMA-Column the FMA Digest met Roberto Trinidad owner of the Filipino Martial Arts Forum (FMAF) and he agreed to contribute something which would talk about what was going on, on the FMAF.

Every issue, Roberto Trinidad gives briefly describes the hottest discussion threads on the FMA Forum. He made it a policy to tell all to feel free to join in and give their two cents on whatever topic, or just lurk and follow the flow of the discussion.

On October 4, 2009, the Filipino Martial Arts Forum celebrated its 5th Anniversary, and has over 1,500 registered members contributing to the discussions in the forum.

Highly suggested you visit the FMA Forum, it is in the Philippines and some of the topics will shed light on what is really going on (**fmaforum.org**). Remember when visiting and if you join the forum “**Speak Up - Speak Out**”.

Now the FMA Digest has known Jeff ‘Stickman’ Finder for a few years, but it wasn’t until the 2nd Annual Stockton Qualifier in April of 2008, which was held at the San Joaquin Delta College that the FMA Digest got to sit down and talk with Jeff and ask if he would write an FMA-Column for the FMA Digest. Thus Dinuguan for Brunch was born.

Now understand that Jeff Finder is very knowledgeable, honest, upfront, and a very skilled practitioner of the Filipino martial arts. His FMA-column is like Dinuguan (if you ever have tasted it) full of spice, and has a flavor that either you will like or not like it. And let me tell you personally the FMA Digest really appreciated the views that Jeff Finder brought about.

Also it is very highly recommended you visit Jeff’s blog (**escrima.blogspot.com**). And also known for his original Hi-Impact sticks, staffs and training knives you need to visit (**www.stickman-escrima.com**).

And finally the FMA Digest was able to get Mataw Guro Luis Rafarl C. Lledo Jr. the Founder of Amara Arkanis (**www.amara-arkanis.com**), and the FMA Educational Depot was created. The FMA Educational Depot focused on the aspect of the Program of Filipino Fighting Arts Education, which was presented in a series. This Course of Study, tested and Proven in the State Colleges and Universities Athletic Association Region IV (Southern Tagalog), is applicable to all styles and schools of the Filipino Fighting Arts.

Even in the abbreviated form, this Course of Study offers the beginner a step-by-step and methodical way of learning. Likewise, it will offer the advance practitioners a better understanding of the underlying principles of their own art. Now with a book just recently printed, it is suggested to purchase it when available for the knowledge will be most benefiting to any Filipino martial arts practitioner whether new or experienced.

Well it is hoped you the reader enjoys a step back and re-living the FMA-Columns of the FMA Digest.

Maraming Salamat Po



mandirigma.org

Volume 3 No.2

A project of Kapisanang Mandirigma, mandirigma.org is a research organization dedicated to cultural awareness. Their focus includes preserving and promoting the warrior arts of the Philippines commonly known as Kali, Eskrima and Arnis. The warrior arts are one of the most important aspects of any society because its very nature is to defend and preserve the culture it originated from. Thus, mandirigma.org is also involved in researching the culture of the Philippines in issues from ancient to current. The primary objective of mandirigma.org is to do its part in keeping alive ancient knowledge and give honor to the sacrifices made by previous generations.

Using both traditional and modern methods in its work, mandirigma.org has organized, collaborated with and participated in classes, conferences, demonstrations, festivals, lectures, seminars and workshops with prominent college and community organizations. Aside from their hands-on approach, mandirigma.org utilizes multimedia technologies such as audio, desktop, video and web to reach people across the globe.

Researching since the 1970's, mandirigma.org believes in being actively involved in giving back to the community. They have collaborated with and volunteered in various non-profit agencies. One project included setting up an award-winning program to positively divert at-risk youth from drugs and gangs using the Filipino Warrior Arts and as a metaphor for adaptation and learning. They have also arranged fundraisers in order to assist causes such as indigenous tribal groups and organizations dedicated to cultural preservation in the Philippines.

Recognizing that this expansive pursuit is at its best a collaborative effort, this has allowed mandirigma.org to meet and work with many fine individuals and organizations throughout the Philippines, the United States and the world, and they welcome all with an open and positive mind to participate and join them on this never-ending cultural adventure.

This article was reprinted from "Masters of Arnis, Kali & Eskrima" that was written by Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite, edited by Master Reynaldo S. Galang and published by Socorro Publications in 1994. A rare treasure if one can find it, only a small handful of these highly sought-after books were printed in the Philippines to be brought over to the United States for independent distribution. It is a landmark publication that opened the doors and set the path for future researchers and practitioners seeking the art in its homeland. It was the first time a researcher had traveled throughout Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao to seek out masters and actually document the experience with interviews and photographs. This book revealed to the world that the art was very much alive and well in the land of its origins. It also made evident that there were a considerable amount of systems in existence than previously believed, and many relatively unknown eskrima systems were introduced to the world for the first time outside of the Philippines. The results of Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite's

previously uncharted quest are a genuine tribute to the arts and masters of Kali, Arnis and Eskrima. A classic and valuable resource that has since influenced and inspired all books that discuss the arts as a whole, it is an essential must have for any serious Eskrimador.

What Makes A Grandmaster?

By Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite

To be recognized as a Grandmaster or Master of combat arts in the Philippines, you must have made your reputation and show mental maturity and physical age. Grandmasters question the rankings of other grandmasters.

Masters and grandmasters are criticized and questioned regarding their skills and abilities. Who bestowed their title? Do they have enough skills for the titles they carry? How many years have they been practicing the art? How old is he? How many followers and students does this man have?

In other martial arts, the attainment of a certain level automatically designates the title Master or Grandmaster. In the Philippines, there are certain norms to be satisfied before one can be called and accepted as a Master or Grandmaster.

A master of the art must be a master of himself. He must be in control. His daily life epitomizes a man in control of his life, his destiny. A master of the art must know his art, its origins, its history, and its philosophy. He must know the techniques, the interplay of techniques, and the reversals of techniques.

A master must know the basics, the intermediate forms and techniques, and the advance levels of the art. Mastery of the art does not only mean so many years in the art, but the amount of experience using the art, one's personal evolution within the art and personal dedication and contribution to the art.

A master of the art must know how to teach and impart knowledge from the art. He must be able to communicate, elaborate and present the art in such a way that each student learns on a personal basis. Each instruction is adapted to the learning process and ability of the student. A master must be a real maestro, a real teacher.

A master of the art must be of good character. He should epitomize the qualities of a leader, the majesty of a noble, and the courage and strength of a warrior. A master of the art is called and acknowledged a Master by other masters, never by himself.

Volume 3 No.3

Philippine Cosmogony

By Cheryl Samson

When looking at Philippine cosmogony it is important to understand the meaning of the term “cosmogony”. In James C. Livingston’s book, “Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion,” he defines cosmogony as “an account of the emergence or creation of world order” (223). Another term that can be substituted for cosmogony is “creation myth”. David and Margaret Leeming in their book, “A Dictionary of Creation Myths,” define creation myths as “a cosmogony narrative that describes the original ordering of the universe. The word cosmogony derives from the Greek words kosmos,

meaning order, and genesis, meaning birth" (?). Livingston also states that cosmogony "is intimately tied to basic concerns about the natural and social order, the status of gods, and humankind, and human action" (223). Philippine cosmogony not only describes the natural and social order that exists in the Philippines, but also portrays the perception and status of a God/several gods and humankind. In understanding Philippine creation myths, one can better understand the religion and behavior of the Philippine people.

According to history, the Philippines has had a mixture of people and outside influences. Geologists believe that land bridges used to connect from the Philippine Archipelago through Borneo, Sumatra, Malaya, and Java. According to one of the texts, "later came the Chinese, Hindus, Arab-Persians, Malays, Spaniards (1521) and other Europeans. Lastly came the Americans..." (Goquingco 13). Along with many ethnic influences came religious influences. Prior to foreign invasion, Filipinos were very animistic in their beliefs. Through the arrival of the Arab-Persians, the religion of Islam was introduced to the south of the archipelago, also known as Mindanao. It was not until the arrival of the Spaniards and other Europeans that Christianity was finally introduced.

The six major groupings within the Philippines can be classified as: "major Christian groups, minor Christian groups, Muslim ('Moro') groups, principal 'Pagan' or Traditionalist Groups, and Multiple-Belief-Holding Groups (such as partially-Christianized 'pagan' groups)" (Goquingco, 23). In some areas of the Philippines, some groups can belong to two or more "religions", like on the island of Palawan. The residents of that island are partially Christianized, while in other sites they are completely Islamized.

One of these partly-Christianized "Pagan" groups is the Ifugaos. The Ifugaos are classified as a part of the BIBAK Groups of the Luzon Highlanders, the northern part of the Philippines. They reside in the mountains and BIBAK stand for the six principle groups: the Bontoc, the Ifugao, the Benguet (Ibaloi), the Apayao (Isneg), and the Kalingga. They practice a highly-developed form of agriculture and are famous for the "Banaue Rice Terraces", one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The majority of this group remains non-Christian, and they successfully resisted Spanish conquest, thus enabling them to preserve a culture that is at least two thousand years old. "They believe in a Supreme Being, although their prayers are chiefly directed to their ancestral spirits" (Goquingco, 63).

The Ifugaos are also known as "Inhabitants of the Earth". They are thought to have migrated from South China or northern Indochina around 800 B.C., bringing traditions such as the pig as a domestic and ceremonial animal. The Ifugaos specifically are polytheists; they believe in deities of the Skyworld, the Underworld, the East, the West, and many other lesser deities such as the sun, moon, thunder, earthquake, etc. They also practice the worship of ancestors and offer rice and sacrifice animals. They believe that they are direct descendants of the Skyworld deities and hold much importance to traditional customs. They are a monogamous group and practice chastity.

The Ifugaos believe in a creation myth similar to that of Adam and Eve found in Genesis within the Christian Bible. Instead of God, their god is named Mak-no-ngan, Adam's name is substituted as Uvigan, and Eve's name is substituted as Bugan. Similar to the epic in Genesis, they are tempted to eat fruit from a tree, but there is no mention of a snake. Both eat the fruit from the tree and are punished. The differences between the Christian and the Ifugao myths are that Uvigan dies and Bugan is left to take care of their

children. Their children became evil and Mak-no-ngan starves them by causing the rice plants to wither and die. In an effort to feed her children, Bagan squeezes her breasts and two streams of milk hit the ground. With this milk she is able to feed her children temporarily. After it ran out, in desperation she squeezes her breasts harder until blood hits the ground. Upon Bagan's sacrifice, Mak-no-ngan takes pity and grows the rice once again, this time providing white rice from Bagan's milk, and red rice from Bagan's blood.

This creation story shows the importance of the land, especially the rice terraces, within Ifugao culture. The similarity to the epic in Genesis may have stemmed from the Christian influence of the lowlanders. The Ifugao creation story also demonstrates the importance of human sacrifice, family, and discipline.

Aside from the Highlanders of Luzon, the Philippines has other "pagan", traditionalist, or indigenous-belief-holding groups such as the Negritos and the Mangyans. The Negritos or Aetas are a fast-vanishing people seen as the aborigines of the Philippines, it's "first inhabitants"; they are believed to have come from a forest home in the sunken land of Sunda and now occupy remote areas, such as foothills, mountains, and forests, all over the Philippines. Negritos offer prayers to the rainbow and believe in a mythical beast with a horse's head. This beast is said to dwell in the trees and is called Balendik. They believe in spirits and gods, "principally Tolandian, who punishes adultery; Kilat, who makes thunder; and Balandang, who herds pigs and deer. [Some] believe that the earthworms and the monkeys are informer-messengers of Tolandian; they therefore eat the monkeys as an insurance against betrayal by the informers" (Goquingco, 84).

The Mangyans are found on the island of Mindoro, southwest of Luzon, and are highly influenced by the Chinese culture. The earliest documents describe the local chiefs trading with Chinese merchants and the neighboring islands. Within their community they have mediums who are supposed to possess the power to drive away evil spirits. Within other communities they believe that illness is caused by the visit of a devil of the forest, a dead relative, or a guardian angel.

According to the Mangyans and the Negritos, there was a vast sea formed by a huge ocean. King Manaul, a character within their creation myth, is said to have declared himself the enemy of the earth and sky. In response to his boldness, the liquid element scattered water into space, while the sky sent out its winds. They tried to punish him, but King Manaul always managed to escape. Finally, King Manaul begged for light, and instantly a multitude of fireflies appeared. He also desired counselors, and as a result of this request, all kinds of birds showed up at his side. As a result of gluttony, he began to eat the birds, while the birds began to eat the fireflies. Insulted at the birds' actions, King Manaul punished his owls forcing them to stay awake during the night, which explains their double-sized eyes. This is so that in the future they might see better and not eat his fireflies. The king of the air, angry at King Manaul's actions, vomited up lightning, thunderbolts, and whirlwinds. He asked aid from King Captan of the sea, to help punish King Manaul. He sent huge rocks and stones to crush Manaul from the sky, but King Manaul still managed to avoid them. As a result of these stones, and the anger between Manaul and Captan, the earth found its beginning.

This creation myth shows the sacredness and importance of nature within the Negrito and Mangyan communities. There is large representation of animals mentioned

in the myth, which may represent their respect towards animals and their involvement within nature.

In the Southern part of the Philippines, mostly on the island of Mindanao, there is a prominent Islamic presence. The early Spaniards named them “Moros” similar to the “Moors” (followers of Islam) within Spain. ‘Morolandia’ is a land of beauty, adventure, romance; of sultanates, rajahs, and princesses; of imams (holy men) and of austere fasts; of gaiety and of a history of fierce fighting against colonial invaders” (Goquingco, 155). The Muslims are considered one of the most highly-civilized groups within the Philippines. The history of Islam is thought to have arrived in Sulu and Mindanao through a missionary, in about the year 1380. Another individual who is believed to introduce the Islam religion was a Muslim prince, Sarip Kabungsuwan from Johore, who was said to have converted all the people of Mindanao, and other portions of the Philippines, to Islam. “Muslim communities were the most culturally and politically advanced in the Philippines at the time of the Spaniards’ arrival” (Goquingco, 155). Dean Cesar Majul credits their resistance stating, “It was Islam that institutionalized their loyalty to their sultan...sanctioned their attempts to resist alien rule, and gave a religious character to their patriotism” (Goquingco, 156). Despising their kindred, who were colonized through Spanish rule, the Muslims increased their commitment towards their religion of the Prophet and to save their lands. Today, the Muslim or Moro peoples constitute the largest single non-Christian group within the Philippines. Many Muslims are deeply religious and continue to celebrate their many holidays. They are also “lovers of gentle things such as beauty and art, as well as proud of their cultural heritage which is notably rich, especially in literature” (Goquingco, 157).

One major Muslim group within the Philippines, are the Maranaos, who live near Lake Lanao, in Lanao del Sur. The Maranao is a dedicated Muslim, attached to tradition. “Many cultural traits that the Maranaos have today are similar to those of the people of South China” (Goquingco, 182). Some examples of this may be the pageantry that goes on within a Maranao wedding, the beating of gongs to celebrate feasts, and the wearing of white apparel as a sign of mourning the dead.

According to the Maranao creation myth, the world was created by a great Being, bearing no name. The world, as well as the earth, is divided into seven layers. Different kinds of beings inhabit each layer of the earth. We humans inhabit the top layer, the second layer, by dwarves, and the third layer, found under the sea or lake is inhabited by nymphs. The sky also consists of seven layers. The seventh layer is considered heaven, which is divided into seven layers more. Angels are believed to inhabit each layer of the sky. They possess wings that enable them to fly, and do not need food for survival. Heaven is found on the seventh layer of the sky, where good people’s spirits go after they die. People who “barely made it” are thought to be found in the lowermost layer, the bottom of heaven. In heaven there is a tree-of-life. On each leaf of this tree, the name of every person living on earth is written. When the leaf ripens or dries and falls, it is believed that the person whose name the leaf carries also dies. “The soul of every person is found in tightly-covered jars kept in one section of heaven” (Eugenio, Philippine Folk Literature: The Myths, 90). This particular section of heaven is guarded closely by a monster, Walo, with a thousand eyes.

A close examination on the Maranao creation myth shows a continual repetition and great emphasis on the number “seven”. Seven, often a religious number, must be a

sacred number within their culture. There are no deities that exist in the creation myth of the Maranaos in comparison to the traditionalist or “pagan” groups within the Philippines. A lengthy portion on the description of heaven, death, and souls, shows the importance of the afterlife within Maranao culture.

The last major groupings within the Philippines are that of the major and minor Christian groups. Christianity was brought to the Philippines at the arrival of the Spanish and European occupation. It is prominent among the plains and lowlands of Luzon and Visayas, both the northern and middle region of the Philippines. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, and spread of Christianity, the people that inhabited these areas believed in the afterlife. Some worshipped the Supreme Being and Creator whose name was Bathala among the Tagalogs, Laon among the Visayans, and Boni among the Ilocanos. They also believed in spirits and deities, ranging from a god of agriculture to a god of war. Others believed in Allah and in Mohammed, His prophet. Hindu images were also present in the Philippines from Indian influence, which can also serve as an explanation to the presence of Sanskrit within the Tagalog dialect. The goals that the Spaniards brought into the Philippines also included their responsibility to “bring Christianity to all the heathen people of the world” (Goquingco, 191). In order to do so successfully, “she had to interfere with the very life-including the social, political, and religious aspects-of the people she came in contact with, so as to impose on them her culture...God, gold, and glory...sums up the aims of Spanish colonization-and...God comes first” (Goquingco, 191). Christianity was a religious and political tool to successfully subjugate the people as well as an effective attempt to wipe out previous pagan or Muslim beliefs. But this attempt was not always successful and in many cases, led to the mixture of Christianity and animistic beliefs, creating a different form of Christianity. Three main groups that have immigrated into the United States are the Tagalogs, the Ilocanos, and the Visayans.

According to the Tagalogs, the world began with no land, but only the sea and the sky and between them a hawk. The hawk, which grew tired of flying around, tried to stir up the sea so it could throw its waters against the sky. The sky, in order to restrain the sea, showered upon it many islands until it could no longer rise, so instead it ran back and forth. At the same time, the land breeze and sea breeze were married and had a child, the bamboo. One day when the bamboo was floating it struck the feet of the hawk that was on the beach. The hawk angry at this situation pecked the bamboo, and out of it came the first man and first woman, Malakas, which means “strong”, and Maganda, which means “beautiful”. The earthquake called on all the birds and fish to see what should be done and they all agreed upon marriage. The couple then married and bore many different races of people. One day, after growing tired of all the children, the father seized a stick and began to beat them. Frightened, the children fled in different directions, seeking hidden rooms in the house-some hiding within the walls, some ran outside, some hid in the fireplace, and the rest fled to the sea. It is believed that those who hid in the rooms of the house later became the chiefs of the islands; and those who concealed themselves in the walls became slaves. Those who ran outside were free men; and those who hid in the fireplace became Negroes; while those who fled to the sea were gone many years, and when their children returned they were the white people.

This myth shows the dependence of Tagalog’s on the resource of the bamboo. Since the Tagalog-speaking region is very diverse, it shows the explanation for different races present within that area. There are no references to prophets or deities and instead

the sky, the sea, and land are mentioned and personified, showing the Tagalog's respect for nature and the world.

According to the Ilocano creation myth, there were two giant cyclopean beings, named Angalo and Aran. They lived before the creation of the sky, the sea, the land, and mankind. Angalo created the world at the command of the supreme god, who is unknown in the epic. In the beginning the earth was entirely plan and lacked the seas, the mountains, the hills, and the valleys. Angalo dug the earth with his fingers, and with the earth he extracted, the present mountains and hills. He urinated into big and deep holes, which became the present oceans and seas. "He spat and his sputum became the first man and woman" (Eugenio, *Philippine Folk Literature: The Myths*, 69). Then he put up the sky, the sun, the moon, and arranged the stars. Some people believe that Angalo and Aran came from a land in the west, while others say they came from a land inhabited by giants near the South Pole. According to one story, Angalo and Aran, while wandering about the earth, came upon an enormous treasure of pearls in the Sulu Sea. Quarreling over the pearls, when they were in the Visayan Islands they shook the earth to its foundations. The land broke up into many parts, as a result of their quarrel, and this explains the great number of islands in the Visayan region of the Philippines.

Although the Ilocanos were also among the major Christianized groups within the Philippines they are still able to retell their version of the creation story, through the use of their own Adam and Eve. Ironically, their mention of cyclopean beings shows the richness of their knowledge and culture with a reference to Greek or Roman mythology. Their mention of a Supreme God incorporates the presence of animistic beliefs and their story not only explains the origin of human beings, the sky and the stars, but also the arrangement of the Visayan Islands within the Philippines.

The many versions of creation myths within the Philippines show the rich diversity within Philippine culture. Creation myths and cosmogony help provide the individual with explanations to the different beliefs and practices of Philippine people. With the distinctive religious groups ranging from Christian, Islamic, and pagan rituals and influences, you produce a different array of the world, humankind's, and even sometimes the Philippines' existence. Philippine creation myths serve the purpose in better understanding the rich culture within the Philippine archipelago and its inhabitants.

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Cheryl Samson is the new online editor for mandirigma.org with experience in writing research articles and interviews. She is a graduate of the University of California, Irvine and will be receiving her Masters from UCLA this June in Social Welfare. She has been a performing artist for Sining Ginto (Golden Arts) a traditional Philippine dance troupe. Cheryl has worked actively

for many years in various non-profit agencies in the Los Angeles Filipino and Asian American communities as a volunteer and Program Administrator. She began her Eskrima training in Kapisanang Mandirigma's community "Kali Klub" program with SIPA (Search to Involve Pilipino Americans), FilAmArts (The Association for the Advancement of Filipino-American Culture) and PWC (Pilipino Workers Center). Currently she is training in the Lameco Eskrima S.O.G.1. method (Backyard LAMECO) under the guidance of Guro Hospecio "Bud" Balani, Guro Arnold Noche and Guro Arturo "Dino" Flores who are also the mandirigma.org advisors.

Volume 3 No.4

Giving the Right Credits

By Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite

In today's society, martial arts practitioners are constantly bombarded by the knowledge and techniques of various martial arts arriving from all four corners of the world. These are the same exact techniques that were once forbidden to be taught outside the family circle by the very same people who created it and used it. Those people dedicated their lives in the laboratory of the battlefield just to experiment whether their techniques would work or not. Many lives had been wasted before the techniques were ever refined. The masters from the different martial arts devoted their time, energy and, above all, their life in the development of their fierce combat techniques.

The Filipino martial arts (Eskrima, Kali, Arnis), Kung-Fu, Thai Boxing, Karate, Indonesian Silat, Jiu-Jitsu, Western Boxing, Tai-Chi, Judo, Savate and other martial arts are just a mere phone call away. In our generation today, we are extremely fortunate to have these different types of martial arts available within our grasp.

I remember Grandmaster Jose D. Caballero who was my teacher in the De Campo Uno-Dos-Tres Orihinal System. It took me more than one year to court him, bringing him food each day on every visit as a means of a gift, just for him to accept me as a student. It was primarily because I was an outsider, one who didn't belong to their family, that I was not accepted right away. It was also because of my perseverance, that I never stopped coming to his house to ask him to teach me, that I was finally accepted to become one of his disciples.

Nowadays, you can study any and all kinds of martial arts as you wish, because they are available within your reach, for as long as you have the determination to learn. Due to the abundance of these martial arts that we study, we somehow consciously or subconsciously mix it together as one. This brings us now to the big problem that evolves due to the fact that some martial arts teachers, as well as some students, are not honest enough in giving the right credits to where they have gotten the knowledge from or where they have attained the techniques from.

One afternoon in Manila, Philippines, during our Sunday sessions with Grandmaster Antonio Ilustrisimo in Luneta Park, we noticed two bystanders carefully observing our training with extremely watchful eyes. I, being one of the spokesmen of the Kali Ilustrisimo System, approached the two men and asked them if they knew Eskrima, Kali or Arnis. I also asked them if they would show us some of their moves. The demonstration that they performed for us was quite impressive. Grandmaster Ilustrisimo, who does not impress easily at all especially if you are from another style of Kali, was

astounded. After their demonstration we asked immediately who their teacher was. One of the young men replied that they did not have a teacher that they just went to the mountains and meditated to formulate the techniques, which they had just performed. We did not believe him nor them. Master Tony Diego said to me that it was such a pity to their teacher, whoever it was, that these two men would turn out to be so disrespectful.

Less than a year later, during our meeting with the different grandmasters of Arnis Philippines, I met an old master that demonstrated the same techniques that I saw earlier from the two men. When I asked the master if he knew of the two, he replied that they were his students.

The truth will always come out. Giving the right credits to where we have learned the techniques from pays a lot of respect to the people who invented it and devoted their life in battle just to prove that it works. It is their pride that their names are being remembered and honored by us who are now practicing or who have practiced their once called forbidden art.

This article was first published in VORTEX (Volume 4, Number 1) in 1995. A quarterly newsletter of Lameco Eskrima International, the publisher was the late Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite who passed away on April 10, 1997. The editor was Arnold A. Noche, one of the remaining survivors of Lameco SOG (Sulite Orihinal Group) and a mandirigma.org advisor.

Volume 4 No.1

This article was brought to our attention by Guro Arturo "Dino" Flores. Quoting Guro Dino, "Many history books about the Philippines seem to essentially say that the Spanish came and conquered, and that was the end of that. Most books being from a Eurocentric perspective fail to say there has been constant resistance throughout the occupation. Between the periods of Lapu Lapu defeating Magellan in 1521 to the Katipuneros ejecting the Spaniards in 1898, the Filipinos never gave up the fight for freedom. The story of Francisco Dagohoy and the Boholano Revolution Against Spain is an example of the fight. Even if it meant certain death, in a conflict with one of the world's strongest empires."

Thursday, September 29th, 2005

The Boholano Revolution Against Spain

By Alan Cajes

Francisco Dagohoy led the longest revolt against the Spaniards in Philippine history. The revolt took the Spaniards 85 years (1744-1829) to quell. Forced labor was one of the causes of the revolt. But what triggered the decision to rise up in arms against the Spanish authorities in Bohol was the refusal of a Jesuit priest to give a Christian burial to Dagohoy's brother.

Dagohoy was a cabeza de barangay of Inabanga. Upon the order of Father Gaspar Morales, a Jesuit cura of Inabanga, Sagarino went to the mountains to arrest a Boholano renegade. The fugitive, however, resisted arrest and killed Sagarino in a fight before he himself died.

When Dagohoy learned about his brother's death, he searched for his brother's body. He found it and brought the remains to Inabanga for a Christian burial. Father Morales, however, did not agree saying the Sagarino died in a duel. Besides, Sagarino did

not receive the sacrament of extreme unction. Hence, giving him a Christian burial was contrary to religious practices at that time. What complicated the situation was the order of the priest to expose the rotting corpse for about three days in front of Inabanga Church. It is also possible, however, that since the priest refused to grant the request, Dagohoy decided to place the corpse there to force the priest to change his mind. Dagohoy eventually buried his brother without the benefit of a Catholic burial.

These strings of events led Dagohoy to make a vow to correct the wrong done to his brother. In the process, he stopped paying tribute to the Spaniards and refused to render the required “forced” labor. He also called upon his relatives, friends and the other residents to do the same and fight for their freedom.

The ground was fertile for Dagohoy’s call. Around 3,000 Boholanos rallied to his call and joined him in a revolt against Spanish injustice and tyranny. Together with other leading members of the Tagbilaran, Baclayon and Dauis principalia, Dagohoy proclaimed the “Independence of Bohol” in the mountains of Talibon and Inabanga. The concept of independence, however, might not be applicable at that time. What is most likely is that the revolutionaries stopped submitting themselves to the dictates of the Spanish authorities and decided to move to the mountains where they can live on their own in peace.

Up there in the mountains, the revolutionaries established their headquarters, which they fortified with trenches of big rocks. Just like the way some upland farmers pile up big rocks on top of another in their farms. They also build dwellings for their families and cleared up some of the forest areas so that they can plant crops for their subsistence. Since Dagohoy has experience in leading a community being a cabeza de barangay, it is safe to assume that he set some rules and norms to maintain peace and order in the new community. When the other Boholanos heard about the revolt, they expressed their sympathy by joining the revolutionaries or by supplying them with arms and money.

From time to time, the revolutionaries would raid the coastal towns, assault the Spanish garrisons, loot churches and kill Spaniards. In one of these raids, they killed the cura of Jagna, an Italian Jesuit priest, and Father Morales. Dagohoy fulfilled the promise he made over the grave of his brother and continued to lead the revolt until his death. It is unknown when and how he died. It is probable that he died of old age or sickness a little before or after the 1800s. What is certain is that the revolution did not end with his death. The Spaniards were not happy with the Dagohoy-led revolt. In fact, there were several attempts to suppress it. The historian Gregorio Zaide has this to say:

“News of the remarkable success of Dagohoy worried the Spanish authorities in Manila. In 1747 Bishop Juan de Archederra, acting Governor-General of the Philippines (1745-1750), dispatched a punitive expedition to Bohol under the command of Don Pedro Lechuga. Commander Lechuga won a few skirmishes but failed to crush the rebellion. In desperation, he sent a commando unit into the mountains to kill or capture Dagohoy, his sister Gracia, and other leaders. The commandos returned empty-handed because they could not penetrate Dagohoy’s fortified stronghold (p. 154).”

The nationalist historian Renato Constantino also narrated Spanish efforts to quell the revolt. He said: “Perhaps the best indication of the importance and the success of this rebellion may be seen in the persistent efforts exerted by both the State and the Church to negotiate with Dagohoy. After the unsuccessful military attempts to suppress the revolt, it

was the Church's turn to make the effort. Bishop Espeleta of Cebu tried to persuade the rebels to give up their resistance by promising to secure a general amnesty, to find remedies for the abuses of government officials, and to assign secular priests instead of Jesuits to the Bohol parishes. The rebels refused the offer."

The revolt continued. By 1770, five years before the waging of the American War for Independence against Great Britain, there were already about 30,000 revolutionaries in Bohol.

It was only in April 1828, three years after the arrival of Governor-General Mariano Ricafort, that the Spaniards sent its strongest expedition to Bohol. This is understandable because Spain experienced problems in its other colonies in the 1800s. For instance, the Spanish American colonies revolted in 1810 until 1826, thus severing the link between Acapulco and Manila. It was, therefore, a hard time for Spain. It was no longer a world superpower as it was in the 16th century. And it could not quell the Dagohoy revolution in Bohol.

Probably to help save its face after its defeats from the forces of Dagohoy and its loss of colonies, Spain decided to put an end to the revolt using Spanish and native (like Cebuanos) troops. According to Zaide: "Fighting with desperate courage, the indomitable Boholanos resisted the enemy, whose heavy artillery pieces caused much havoc to their fortifications and took a terrible toll of human lives. Wearied by the ceaseless combat, weakened by hunger and thirst, and depleted in numerical strength, they made their last stand in the mountain of Boasa under the command of the valiant brothers, Handog and Auag. In June 1829, they fought their last battle and were crushed by Spain's superior arms. The survivors fled into the forest, where they grimly continued to carry on their hopeless cause (p. 156)."

The revolt ended formally on August 31, 1829. Manuel Sanz, commander of the Spanish forces, officially reported that 3,000 Boholanos escaped to other islands, 19,420 surrendered, 395 died in battle, 98 were exiled and around ten thousand revolutionaries were resettled in the areas of Balilihan, Batuan, Bilar, Cabulao and Catigbian. These figures all point to the fact that the revolt was widespread in the province; hence, it was not simply a Dagohoy revolt. Dagohoy started it and continued to be a source of inspiration to his comrades even after his death. But it was a Boholano revolution against Spain.

Notes:

1. Some sources claim that the real name of Dagohoy was Francisco Sendrijas and that he is called Dagohoy due to his ability to move like the wind. Literally, the name is a combination of "dagon sa hoyohoy" that means "talisman from the breeze".
2. Constantino claimed that Dagohoy's brother, Sagarino, was a renegade who had abandoned the Christian religion and that Father Morales ordered a native constable to arrest Sagarino. Sagarino resisted arrest and killed the constable before he himself died.

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Volume4 No.2

Arnold A. Noche is one of the remaining survivors of Lameco SOG under the late Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite of Lameco Eskrima International and is also a co-founder and instructor of Kapisanang Mandirigma. He made a recent visit to the Philippines to attend the 3rd World FMA Festival and Bakbakan International Invitational Tournament.

Kali Klub, a project of Kapisanang Mandirigma, has received numerous awards and commendations from the City of Los Angeles, City of Walnut and State of California since the inception of the program in 1999.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer is undeniably the country's most widely read and circulated newspaper. With over 2.7 million nationwide readers daily, it enjoys a market share of over 50% and tops the readership surveys. Not only is it the most read among all sectors and ages, it is also the country's most trusted source of hard-hitting news and countless expos's. Distinguished by award-giving bodies like the Catholic Mass Media Awards, Jaime Ongpin Awards for Investigative Journalism and Anvil Awards, it is the Philippines' most awarded broadsheet with over 200 awards and citations.



Arnis Boosts Fil-Am's Sense of Pride

By Volt Contreras

Inquirer

Published on Page A1 of the October 4, 2006 issue of the **Philippine Daily Inquirer**.

CROSSING land bridges that once linked the Philippine archipelago to the Asian mainland, ancient fighters introduced to Filipinos a form of martial arts believed to have come from India and now called kali, eskrima and arnis de mano.

Yes, those rattan canes - and the graceful moves that make them lethal - are that old, according to generally held notions as to the origins of the Pinoy warrior art.

With a deep sense of history, a Filipino-American based in California since the late '60s considers his mastery of kali (considered the pre-Spanish name for arnis or eskrima) as a bridge to the country of his birth - and hopes that more Fil-Am's would join him in paying ambidextrous homage to their shared cultural roots.



Kali Klub sa FilAm ARTS

Arnold Noche has been taking time from his business each week, driving up to 48 kilometers from his home in the Gardena suburb, to conduct two-hour training sessions for kali enthusiasts of all ages at Filipino community centers in Los Angeles.

"There's something about a stick in the hand that is very Filipino", noted Noche

Noche and other "backyard" eskrimadors started the Kali Klub

project in 1999 and have since taught an average of 250 students a year, around 90 percent of them Fil-Am's aged 5 to over 40.

Since 2004, Kali Klub has been conducting classes in partnership with FilAm Arts (Association for the Advancement of Filipino American Arts & Culture), a nonprofit, multidisciplinary arts organization located on N. Vermont Avenue in LA.

Dealing with Confusion

"I could have taught my (Fil-Am) students something else to help them deal with whatever confusion they may have about their cultural identity. But I am an eskrimador, and this is my way of helping them understand the complexities of being a Fil-Am," Noche said.

His family moved to the States when he was only 2 years old. At age 8 he began studying karate and, at age 12, picked up his first kali sticks - henceforth earning bruises and scars in a discipline that would "control my life."

At 40, Noche runs his own management consultancy and multimedia firm ATF1898 - a proud reference to the year Filipinos declared their independence from Spain. But in a recent Inquirer interview in Manila, he said he would rather be counted as a member of the "Filipino warrior class."

He was referring to the disciples of an ancient art that had been in progression long before foreign powers reached Philippine soil. Employing real swords or knives in its original form, kali survived by being "secretly practiced" during colonial times when Filipinos were prohibited from carrying weapons.

"It has been handed down from one generation to another, and has eventually made its way around the world. Now it is not only practiced by thousands of martial artists but also favored by elite military and law enforcement groups," Noche said.

Action Flicks

Further proof of its global appeal, he noted, is the growing number of Hollywood action flicks that feature kali movements in their fight sequences.

Matt Damon, for example, in an interview on the hand-to-hand combat style of his "Jason Bourne" character, pronounced it as "kay-lee," he said. Vin Diesel had also acknowledged training in kali for his sci-fi flick, "The Chronicles of Riddick."

"Mission Impossible 3" and "Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life" featured brief fight scenes with the lead stars Tom Cruise and Angelina Jolie, respectively, "using Filipino fighting sticks," Noche said.

And Noche has this to say about Star Wars' Yoda: "My impression was that his moves (with the dazzling light saber) were more Filipino than samurai."

Through the centuries, the kali system -- believed to have started in the Visayas - diversified through many individual masters around the country who continually added to its repertoire of attacks and defenses.

Basic Principle

But the basic principle remains: "For weaponry to serve as extensions of the hand for maximum impact and reach," Noche explained.

And the weapons refer not only to the more familiar canes, but also to daggers, whips, chains, "a mere pen or a rolled newspaper." The movements would remain the same, with the fighter merely adjusting his range.

"Filipino martial arts (FMA), is the only one I know where you train on day one already with a weapon in your hand. Other martial arts begin training empty-handed and you get to use more intricate weapons as you progress," he said.

While maintaining that no particular combat method can be theoretically considered superior to another since it all depends on a fighter's skills, Noche pointed out: "In (FMA) I do have weapons in my hands, but losing them doesn't mean I could no longer do damage."

Take note, he said, that a hand that holds a rattan stick also forms a closed fist - which means that this hand can be used either to strike an enemy with the stick or, at closer range, to punch him.

And even with the hands full, the kali system is fluid enough to incorporate maneuvers for tripping or throw-downs (just as in judo or aikido) or for choking an opponent. This is an example of how the method, from being fundamentally based on frontal blows, has "evolved" with every master who improved on it.

The Noche Style



Guro Noche and Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite - 1995, Los Angeles, California

Noche's own style - the Lameco Eskrima - is just one of the many branches in this evolution. Before he became a "guro" (teacher) to his students, Noche found his own much revered "Punong Guro" (Master) in another California-based Fil-Am, the late Edgar Sulite.

Founded by Sulite, Lameco stands for largo (long-range fighting), medio (medium-range) and corto (close-range) - or what Noche called the "synthesis" of these three orientations.

"We were part of Edgar's backyard

group," he recalled, referring to his two fellow guros now running the Kali Klub, Arturo 'Dino' Flores and Hospecio 'Bud' Balani. "When Punong Guro died (of natural causes) in 1997, it would have been easy for us to bury the art with him."*

"Keeping it alive is one thing, how to keep it alive is another," he said. "We can either go the commercial route (become full-time instructors, charge for private trainings, or hit the seminar circuit), or go the community route."

Noche had obviously taken the latter path, charging no personal fees for Kali Klub. "Everything we charge (as tuition) goes back to the program," he said.

The students are asked to provide their own black training attire, rattan sticks and safety goggles - "in addition to dedication, discipline and an open mind."

No Mainstream Draw

But for all that he's willing to share about his passion, Noche easily sensed during his recent visit to Manila that kali - even as a sport or fitness regimen - had never enjoyed a mainstream draw in the very nation that supposedly developed it.

"As a balikbayan, I can see that it has a following here but you still have to find it. It is not commercially available; it's taught in some schools but it can still go far," he said.

Last year's Southeast Asian Games in Manila finally included arnis - but this "new" event hardly got any media coverage. While Filipinos won three gold medals in arnis, the home crowd still reserved its loudest cheers for the other more popular fighting disciplines, especially tae kwon do.

Also, no local movie star has been able to popularize arnis the way a Bruce Lee or a Jackie Chan brought Chinese martial arts to the world. And yet here now is Noche reporting that "kay-lee" has entered Hollywood lore.

But Noche has made sure no student of his mispronounces anything; even with non-Fil-Ams in the class, Kali Klub preserves the original Filipino terms for specific drills and maneuvers ("armas" for weapons, "salok" for uppercut, "sagasa" for run over, etc.)

And with every "palo" (hit) or "ilag" (evasion) that he teaches his fellow Fil-Am's, this guro helps them rediscover their now distant ancestral heritage lest this kinship, like the primeval land bridges, erode in time.



Guro Noche visits Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite gravesite - 2006, Paranaque, Manila, Philippines.

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* **Note:** Arturo 'Dino' Flores supported by Hospecio 'Bud' Balani initially founded the Kali Klub in early 1999. Arnold Noche joined soon after to help bring the project to a new level of expansion. Also note that the interview is the journalist's personal perspective of the information

presented to him.



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This article was published in Vol. 21, No. 298 of the **Philippine Daily Inquirer** on Wednesday, October 4, 2006.
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Volume 4 No.3

This article was brought to our attention by Guro Hospecio "Bud" Balani, Jr. As it turns out both his father, Hospecio Balbuena Balani, Sr., and his uncle, Martin D. Balbuena, were both members of the Regiment. He also had numerous uncles in the Regiment but to get their names, he'd have to dig deep into the darkest recesses of his mind, and it might get ugly in there. From what he understands, "The United States wanted to be at Regiment strength so they eventually merged the three Battalions into one unit and formed the 1st Filipino Regiment (keeping the First Unit's Patch). Regiments are two or more Battalions, Battalions are three or more Companies. Companies are three or more Platoons. Platoons are three or more Squads. Squads are nine strong. These are just rough estimates. Also, any unit with the spelling of "Philippines" were US Army units that were recruited in the homeland. There were many Philippine Scout units, all in the Philippine islands. Any unit with the spelling of "Filipino", was a unit formed in the United States, with the only units being Laging Una, Sulung and Bahala Na."

Saturday, August 14th, 2004

The 1st and 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments

By David T. Vivit, 1LT, AUS (Ret)

Laging Una - Sulung

Part I

The 1st and 2nd (Laging Una - Sulung) Filipino Infantry Regiments were units of the Army of the United States (AUS) inducted into service during World War II. They were wholly manned by Filipino citizens in this country and Hawaii and officered by both Filipinos and Americans, the only non citizen units in the American Citizen Army. They were similar to the Philippine Scouts in that the latter were also wholly manned by Filipino citizens with both Filipino and American officers, but the similarities ended there. The Scouts were professional soldiers in the Philippine Department of the United States Regular Army (USA). Most of the men were married and enjoyed a high economic and social status in the Philippines in contrast to the mostly single discriminated against (in the U.S.) "laborers" and students of the Filipino Regiments. Each group of Filipino soldiers played important but different roles in World War II.

After the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor and Clark Field, Filipinos in the U.S. and Hawaii rushed to Army Recruiting Stations to enlist only to be rejected because they were not (US) citizens (Filipinos were not eligible for U.S. citizenship before the war). As residents, however, they were registered under the Draft Law, and when the first

Filipino Battalion was activated in San Luis Obispo, California in April 1942, they "volunteered" for the draft instead of waiting for their call.

This unique unit was to spearhead MacArthur's liberation forces when he returned to the Philippines. But the military authorities made a great miscalculation! In three months the 1st Filipino Battalion became the 1st Filipino Regiment, activated in Salinas on July 13, 1942 and on October 14th of the same year the 2nd Regiment was activated at Ft. Ord, bringing together a fighting force of more than 7,000 men. If created earlier, the Battalion very well could have become a Division. By the time it was activated hundreds had already joined the Navy and Army Air Corps. With an average age of over 30, they more than made up this overage by their spirit and enthusiasm. In no other units of the AUS in WWII, including the much publicized 442nd Regimental Combat Team (NISEI), was the motivation greater and the morale higher than in the 1st & 2nd Filipino Regiments. About the end of 1942 and in early 1943, these Filipino soldiers became American citizens under a new U.S Naturalization Law in mass oath taking ceremonies which made headlines throughout the country. After two years of intensive training in California without a single Court Martial case, these units went to New Guinea to prepare for their landings in the Philippines.

Here the 2nd Regiment was split up into the Counter-Intelligence Units (CIC), the Alamo Scouts and the Philippine Civil Affairs Unit (PCAU) all of which played important roles during the liberation.

The 1st Regiment remained intact as a combat team but for some unknown reason was not with the initial landing forces in Leyte. Instead it was relegated to the minor (but more dangerous against a fanatical enemy) role of mopping-up operations in Samar and Leyte. In accomplishing this difficult mission with minimum casualties, it earned the reputation of being the "most decorated regiment in the Pacific". It remained for a "child" of the regiments, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion (Bahala Na) known only as "commandos" in the Philippines, whose operations during the occupation had been kept secret until recently, to really "spearhead MacArthur's return to the Islands." But this is a story in itself.

More significant than their military feats was their accomplishments in the field of romance. These gallant soldiers literally chased the shy, coy and above all, suspicious Filipino girls even as the war was going on. Having won them, they had to go through much Army red tape to get married. But marry they did and when the war was over, they brought their war brides back to the U.S. Those who didn't have the patience for the hard to get "Pinays" came back to the U.S. but later returned as civilians to bring back their post-war brides. Now it was for them to be regarded so highly, who before the war were looked down on so lowly. As respected U.S. citizens they settled down to bring up the second generation of Filipino Americans, many of whom have already served in Viet Nam in the spirit of the 1st and 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments.

Volume 4 No.4

Saturday, August 14th, 2004

The 1st and 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments

By David T. Vivit, 1LT, AUS (Ret)

Laging Una – Sulung

Part II

Bahala Na

This secret organization was conceived by General MacArthur and his staff even as they were being evacuated from the Philippines to Australia in March 1942. They knew that parts of the Islands remained under guerilla control and somehow a link must be established between them and his headquarters. The problem was where to procure the personnel for this "clandestine" unit, the nucleus of which was already in Australia with a handful of officers and men - patients and crew from a hospital ship - who volunteered to go back.

The problem was conveniently solved by the 1st and 2nd Filipino Regiments. In early 1943 Major General (then Colonel) Courtney Whitney, MacArthur's closest adviser, came to the regiments to ask for volunteers. From among the many who volunteered, were picked the Filipino officers and men of this elite organization. Soon a few officers and men were sent directly to Australia to join the volunteers from the Philippines to form the 5217th Reconnaissance Battalion, "clandestine" which later became the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion (Special). They set up camp in Tagragalba just outside Beaudesert, fifty miles south of Brisbane. After weeks of training and operating under Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB) the first party was sent to the Philippines in October 1943.

Meanwhile, in California a group of enlisted men were sent to the Army Signal School at Camp Crowder, Missouri, from there they were sent to Australia to man the Signal Co., one of the two companies of the 5217th Battalion. A larger group of officers and men were sent to the Army Language School at the Presidio of Monterey. Here they learned elementary Japanese, Japanese ship and aircraft recognition and sailing. These were the officers and men who formed the other bigger company, the Reconnaissance Co. After three months this first big contingent of officers and men were shipped to Australia, arriving there in November 1943 just before the second party left for the Philippines. Other groups followed them from the Regiments through Monterey until the company was brought up to its authorized strength.

In Australia, with their war cry "Bahala Na" (Come What May!), they went through intensive and extensive training under the Australian Army. First they went to the tough jungle school of Canungra where they set new hiking endurance records through mosquito and leech infested mountains and rivers. From there they went to the equally tough SEA WARFARE School on Frazer Island where they learned swimming, underwater demolition, sabotage and guerilla tactics.

In July 1944, a cadre of one officer and five non-commissioned officers arrived from the 82nd Airborne Division in Italy to train a group of men for a pre-invasion mission of sabotage and communication disruptions. Now hardened, the men were ready for the toughest of all their training. But they lacked adequate facilities and proper training aids (they improvised their own C-47 mock door and didn't have a tower to practice jumping) and this coupled with the Australian pilot's inexperience caused the

large number of "casualties", probably a record, in the first class' qualifying jumps. But this didn't daunt the volunteers, for the bigger second class fared better.

While all this training was going on, more parties were being sent to the Islands. Parties of ten to thirty officers and men were outfitted in Brisbane and flown to Darwin where they took the submarines - the same ones which evacuated President Quezon and his exiled Commonwealth Government and the gold bullion from Corregidor to the U.S. A few Philippine Army officers were brought back to Australia from the guerrilla bands to lead some of the parties back to the Islands.

There were nine parties sent, the last one in a Destroyer. This was the party that raised the American flag in Homonhom Island three days before MacArthur landed in Leyte on October 27, 1944. The eighth and last submarine was sunk without a survivor by our own planes in the Battle of the Philippine Sea, the greatest Naval battle in history. The paratroopers who were supposed to be the last and biggest party were never dropped because the invasion was advanced two months ahead of the original MacArthur planned invasion in Mindanao.

After the long and dangerous voyage through the Japanese blockade, the submarines landed in guerrilla controlled areas (as depicted in the motion picture "Back to Bataan") although in some cases the reception was not quite as pleasant as in the picture. But this was the best part of this mission. After landing, the soldiers became civilians and disguised as fishermen, they fanned out through the length and breadth of the Islands in sail or just plain row boats.

In co-operation with the guerrillas whom they supplied with much needed medicines, small arms, ammunition, food, cigarettes and that rare wartime commodity called whiskey (later they brought and circulated the "I Shall Return" magazine and the new and legal "Liberty" peso bills to further confuse the enemy) the men of the Signal Company set up radio stations while the men of the Recon Co., posing as fishermen, farmers, merchants, taxi and caretela drivers and mess boys working in Japanese officers clubs, including Yamashita's, gathered the information. A few were caught and paid the supreme penalty meted out to spies. This information was sent to guerrilla headquarters in Mindanao which relayed it through Darwin and to MacArthur's headquarters in Brisbane.

On this military intelligence was based MacArthur's strategy for the invasion of the Islands. When he "returned" to Leyte, the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion's mission was practically over. But the men didn't stop there. They went on to supply important information which led to decisive battles and engaged in commando tactics, blowing up bridges and ammo dumps.

For their splendid accomplishments, the "Commandos" of the "Balaha Na!" Battalion earned General MacArthur's individual and Unit Commendations and the U.S. Presidential Unit Citation. But curiously enough it was awarded the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation for its work in the Resistance Movement.

Because of the limited space in the submarines (started with three and ended up with one) which were loaded with supplies and because the invasion was advanced two months ahead, not all the officers and men saw action in the Philippines. It was for the Korean War to prove the mettle of these well trained but battle untested men. Besides two who were killed, that unexpected war produced four outstanding "Bahala Na!" officers, two of them paratroopers - all heroes in their own right.

Volume 5 No.1

Searching for the Perfect Stick

By Arnold A. Noche

"I got the magic stick, I know if I can hit once I can hit twice..."

The Warrior Arts of the Philippines, generally known today as Kali, Eskrima and Arnis, is a complete system of self-defense techniques, which utilizes Filipino weaponry as extensions of the hands for maximum impact and reach. Primarily based on bladed movements and widely practiced by the Filipinos long before the coming of the Spaniards to the Philippines in 1521, up until recent times the live blade has been replaced with a rattan stick for modern training purposes. What makes the Filipino Fighting Arts unique is that it begins its training with the use of weaponry and then progresses to empty hand techniques. The training does not regress since it is believed that proficiency in weaponry first will mean perfection in empty hand techniques later. In short, the stick is complimentary to the movements, not supplementary. The stick is actually a misnomer as there are many items that can come in handy and can be used as a stick: a flashlight, a folded fan or umbrella, a golf club, a pen or ruler, a rolled-up magazine or newspaper, a tennis racket, a walking cane or stick and other items that may simulate a stick can be a fine substitute as the need arises.

The stick is said to travel ten times the speed of the empty hand. If you've been in it for a minute, you will notice that the sticks will break. Whether it be the finest rattan or some of the more intricate hardwoods from the Philippines such as Bahi, Kamagong and Nara or even some of the more exotic and expensive hardwoods from different parts of the world such as Ebony, Maple, Palm and Rosewood, it will break after repeated use. Though I still prefer rattan in its natural form, I do try to make it a habit of obtaining a "matched" pair, that is, a pair of sticks that were cut from the same pole. With that in mind, I can then further concentrate more on my development and training in the Filipino Fighting Arts as opposed to wondering which stick was going to break first and how I was going to find another identical stick with the same weight, feel and lifespan. If you're like me and spent countless hours in the past searching for the perfect stick to find one that was worthy of acceptance and admiration, try finding two.

If you're like me and found a source that can get you the rattan poles in it's purest, uncut form, try finding one that was also worthy of acceptance and admiration. Though I have no doubt in my mind that you will find it, you will have also spent an invaluable amount of time searching for the perfect stick instead of training with your perfect stick.

All Things Filipino, a division of ATF1898, Inc., released their latest product... the **got stick**? MS Series, which was designed by Batang Kamagong of Lameco SOG (Sulite Orihinal Group) and endorsed by Kapisanang Mandirigma. It is a multi functional, virtually indestructible stick that is backed with a 1-year limited warranty. It functions well in all weather conditions with 20% less density of steel and 70% less density of aluminum. It has corrosion resistance against harsh elements and environments, stronger than structural steel pound for pound and has superior dimensional stability.

Quoting the designer, "I always wanted a stick that was not cumbersome, heavy and oversized or fragile, light and undersized. We tested this heavily in the backyard for over two years matching it up against some of the thickest rattan and other natural, exotic hardwoods and broke everyone of them. Don't let the color or the thickness of the got stick? MS Series fool you. It's a lot stronger than it looks which makes this product just as unique as the Filipino Fighting Arts itself. Now I just need to figure out how to replace the Cocobolo, Macassar Ebony, Purpleheart, Snakewood and Zebrawood sticks that I used to have in my prized collection. Don't even ask me about what happened to one of my pool cues... I have to replace that too."

Upon further discussions, I later found out that beta testing also involved exposing the got stick? MS Series to severely harsh elements and environments such as fire and snow, heat and cold and the stick still functioned as well as it was supposed to. When I asked about his selection for the grip, he replied, "I needed something that was made of a premium quality, rubber rich formula that didn't absorb moisture and unravel. We all remember that lightweight stick that the late Bruce Lee used in "The Game of Death" that resembled a yantok but we never knew where to get it. The one's that were lucky realized later that it wasn't as durable as depicted in the movie in his fight scene with Guro Dan Inosanto and to effectively use a thin stick like that required either an oversized grip or some really small hands. Regardless, the fight scene was well executed and it was, no doubt, still some of the earlier footages that the general public was able to witness the Filipino Fighting Arts reach the mainstream."

In conclusion, the got stick? MS Series was made for Eskrimadors by Eskrimadors. Multi functional, virtually indestructible and back with a 1-year limited warranty, it is an ancient solution for modern problems. It is quite simple to maneuver, unbelievably fast and light, incredibly easy to carry and handle, inconspicuous as a weapon and can be guised as a thing of utility (i.e. hiking stick, jogging stick, walking stick). Don't sleep on this product. Your search for the perfect stick may have just ended.






To find out more about this "perfect stick" please visit www.allthingsfilipino.com or write to All Things Filipino, a division of ATF1898, Inc., 1245 W. Gardena Boulevard, Suite 201, Gardena, California 90247-4825.



FMA Sunday School

Ever Been to "Sunday School"? 

SEGUIDA

Volume4 No.1

Stabbing for the Heart

Let's start with a few introductions. I'm Jon, Sunday School Headmaster and now apparently, FMA Digest columnist. I guess I want to give you a heads-up on what to expect in my column.

It's all about you, me and all us practitioners and enthusiasts of the Filipino Martial Arts. Maybe a little bit of something on the more personal level. We martial artists are people too, contrary to popular belief. I guess I want it to be like a journey. A journey inside my experiences... Some of them may be similar, different, parallel or opposite, but then again it's an experience.

Journeys start with a first step. What was yours? I took mine real young... mostly for play and to just pass the time... I was a hyperactive child always inquisitive, always moving around... short-eared, hairless energizer bunny. And now, still hairless, a proponent of the Lightning Scientific Arnis International - Lightning Scientific Espada y Daga Serrada system of fighting.

Lots of serious practitioners have more or less tried different arts before deciding on their path. Or for some... when their path is revealed to them.

Did you choose your martial art, or did it choose you?

As a teacher I've met a lot of different types of people who, to some degree, wanted to learn the martial arts. I'm not referring to any martial art in particular, just

martial arts in general. It's hard to remember everyone I've met so I've kinda classified them into four simple categories with varying degrees of interest.

Beginner-Novice-Dabbler

I love these people. They are so eager, enthusiastic and just plain excited. We all start here. Or someplace close to this. Everything is such a wonder. Everything is an experience. Everything is amazing. Our teachers amaze us and we are mystified by all the knowledge that surrounds us.

Recreational Practitioner

A fitness obsession, a hobby for people who want to look cool. People who want to learn something cool. I guess this is the end of the line for some people. It may seem a bit abrupt. But this is pretty much it for some people. If not the end of the line, at least some sort of holding pattern for others.

Serious Practitioner

It's not about having time anymore. They make time. It borders on an addiction. Life gets in the way. Making a living becomes an obstacle to training. Relationships become a test. At some point some people have to make a choice. At some point a choice has already been made for some people. These are dangerous people. They have the knowledge and they know how to use it. Some are realizing that they do have some real potential as a teacher or leader. Some are seriously thinking of becoming instructors. Lines are crossed and decisions are made. Lives change.

Hardcore

Identity. That's what this boils down to. Make the tough choice. Luckily for some others that the choice is made for them. Others have to fight on... and fight every minute to make it happen, to pursue the knowledge, to keep the legacy alive.

But let's think about it again... Is it a level or a mindset? Either way it's a win for the FMA. We need every practitioner we can get. The FMA has been severely under estimated and even ridiculed for a long time.

We are getting there I think. To bringing FMA the recognition it deserves. We do have one thing to thank the Americans for, I terms of their contribution to the FMA. Its for the term FMA itself. We have always thought of it in terms of styles and weapons. Now there's a banner we can band together under. I mean seriously. Styles and affiliations can be so divisive.

But then again, this column isn't about that. This is about individual journeys we go through as practitioners and students. It's also about being teachers and mentors. It's about people who do what we do, what questions we get asked and what issues we face.

FMA is much more than the styles that represent it or the personalities that promote it. It's about heart. It's about the love for it. It's about Passion.

We fight with passion, we train with passion, we write with passion...

Volume4 No.2

Hitting a Nerve - Insubordination

I had a chat conversation a couple of months back with a fellow instructor from a different system of FMA. He put up his school and had just begun offering lessons in FMA. During one of his sessions a fellow practitioner was working with a newbie on some drills for a specific skill set. At some point the newbie's partner escalated and started telling the newbie to escalate and do some other technique not covered in the skill set. Seeing the deviation from the prescribed exercise my friend interrupts the set and tells them to go back to the specific drill where the guy begins mentioning that the home system's chief instructor does this, this and this in the seminar and that the technique in the drill can be countered by so and so... and then he proceeds to partner with my friend and "shows" the technique. In the end the instructor is forced to escalate and neutralize the guy.

Where does petty disobedience end and insubordination begin? What counts as insubordination?

I suggest looking at the extremes first before looking at the various shades of gray in between.

Filipinos have a very polite culture as pointed out to me by my foreign friends and I agree with them on this. Our speech patterns contain respectful responses such as "po" and "opo" and the polite "paki". It's ingrained in our being. It makes us quite sensitive and perceptive regarding polite behavior.

The Chinese and the Japanese have the most acute sense of politeness and respect, all the bowing and rituals, politeness and obedience to the point of servitude. Totally opposite of Western behavior regarding forwardness speaking your mind and standing out. Factors such as these must be taken into account when defining what insubordination is. Gender discrimination also seems a factor. Much more when combined with ego. I've seen an assistant to the instructor get "told off" by a trainee that she was executing the "feeding" of an attack in the exercise "wrong" and that when the lady escalated the technique to prove her point and made a decisive hit on the guy he responds with a derisive "your sister is still tougher than you."

As an instructor, I think it is important to recognize the symptoms of disobedience. I'm all for giving students enough room to learn for themselves, but what safeguards can we establish to maintain order in the class?

Let's get back to disobedience and insubordination. I think these are some of the most extreme ways to disrupt a class. There are differences between the two though. Disobedience could come from a misunderstood instruction or a wrong assumption. I define Insubordination as malicious and willful disobedience.

Ok, so I'm not saying student should blindly obey their instructors, I'm just saying that student should follow their teacher's instructions within reasonable bounds. And I'm not saying that questioning is bad. Not at all, in fact it is good to ask questions. I have no problem with the act of disobedience per se. It's the intent behind the action I'm concerned about.

So, when does a student go too far?

For me it boils down to certain violations:

- Extreme disrespect to the Art, Teachers, Classmates.
- Unwarranted intentional harm to others.
- Malicious and Immoral conduct.

It's not very specific but I kinda like it that way so that students are always kept on their toes about the appropriateness of their conduct. Usually, I listen to feedback from their peer group to check their tolerance and acceptance of certain behaviors. I particularly look at how the ladies in my group react to potentially "offensive" behaviors, though I remind them that they are in a martial arts group and not in a convent.

All in all this becomes important to me because without a certain level of harmony and order in the group training programs cannot be maintained, training gets disrupted if not derailed altogether. That's the whole point of having rules, to create an environment in which students can learn without distraction and disruption.

It soon becomes a matter of discretion for the instructor how he will classify an offense and its gravity and the accompanying punishment. It definitely depends on an instructor's experience, cultural background and maturity to be able to judge a situation correctly and finally the discipline to act on it and the level-headedness to be fair in meting out punishment.

Now PUNISHMENT... that's another fun topic.

Volume4 No.3

Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema

Birthday Celebration

March 18, 2007

UP Diliman Vanguard, DMST Complex, Classroom 1

Each year a gathering of Grandmaster Lema's Lightning Scientific Arnis International instructors and students gather to celebrate his Birthday. A inner group tournament is held, with demonstrations, luncheon, and finally a cake cutting ceremony.

This is an excellent opportunity for all to get together and remember the man who passed on his art to them. It is a sad but joyous time; sad that Grandmaster Lema has passed away, joyous that his art lives on.

The event started with Master Felipe Bot Jocano with an opening prayer, then Grandmaster Vincente Sanchez leading the group in the Philippine anthem. Mrs. Patty L. Caballero (Grandmaster Lema daughter) then said a few words to the assembly. Masters in attendance were introduced.



Referee, judges, and participants

An inner member tournament was the first event. Followed; by Grandmaster Vincente Sanchez, Master Romeo T. Santos and Master Lemio Romy Valleno demonstrating the art.



Grandmaster Sanchez



Master Jon Escudero
Presenting the trophy to the Champion Michael Angelo
Ariz of Mandirigmang Kaliradman



Master Santos



Master Valleno

Upon the completion of the tournament and demonstrations a luncheon was served and then it was time to cut the cake, While Grandmaster Sanchez led the group in singing Happy Birthday. At the conclusion Master Felipe Bot Jocano said the closing prayer. As the day ended and each went their own way, there was a feeling of unite and brotherhood.



Mrs. Patty L. Caballero cuts the cake.



Website



Website



Website



Website



Speak Up - Speak Out

Roberto Trinidad

Volume4 No.4

I've never been good at introductions so I'll cut to the chase. I'm Robbie Trinidad and I'm the administrator of the Filipino Martial Arts Forum (fmaforum.org). I've been actively practicing Filipino martial arts since November 1997 and I started the FMA Forum back in October 2004 when I noticed that there weren't many discussion boards on Filipino martial arts run by Filipinos. Since then, there have been more than 600 registered members discussing various topics on Filipino martial arts such as techniques, history, weaponry, and Filipino culture to boot.

For those of you who have never visited the forum, you might be overwhelmed by the various topics posted. This is what this section of the FMA Digest is for. Every issue, I'll be giving brief descriptions of the hottest discussion threads on the FMA Forum. Feel free to join in and give your two cents on the topic, or just lurk and follow the flow of the discussion. Since this is the first appearance of this column, I'll start by listing some oldies but goodies:

Why are FMA terms in Spanish?

This topic was started in the FAQ section of the Forum. Eventually the thread turned into a discussion on how much Spanish influence there was in FMA. On one side, you have posters saying that Eskrima was a plebian form of stick fighting until it was developed using techniques taught by Spanish friars. On the other side, you have posters with a rebuttal saying that fighting priests are a myth and that the Spanish relied on the force of firearms, not blades, to fight battles. Which side do you take on the debate? You can check out the discussion at www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=6.

Knife vs. Stick

Two able fighters; one with a knife, the other with a stick. Who wins? You have the cutting ability, speed, and fear factor associated with the knife, versus the bone-crushing power and range of the stick. In a duel, which weapon would you choose? Read the discussion at www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=1420.

Video Clips of FMA Masters

Every 2nd Sunday of the month, we hold the FMA Picnic Gathering where we invite practitioners and masters of various FMA systems to share their knowledge in a friendly, non-competitive atmosphere. In the past, we were blessed to have guests such as Rommel Tortal (Pekiti Tersia Kali), Bambit Dulay (Modern Arnis), Rodel Dagooc (Modern Arnis), Frank Sobrino and Jesus Pallorina (WEDO), Bob Silver Tabimina (Tabimina Balintawak), Yuli Romo (Bahad Zu'bu), and many others. You can find the videos at the FMA Media section, specifically at www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showforum=34.

I would like to emphasize that you don't need to register to read the discussions, but you do need to register in order to post. Just head over to fmaforum.org, click on the Discussion Boards link, and join in.

Volume5 No.1

Teaching the Art

Ite et Docete. That's Latin for "Go forth and teach." In today's civilized world, one's coming of age in FMA is not marked by charging into battle, but rather being able to teach. Other martial arts have a strict curriculum that is followed with stringent requirements that have to be met in order to teach. In FMA, it is never that simple.

Pedro Reyes, a senior student of Antonio Ilustrisimo, once wrote, "...*the classical arnis master stands on his own abilities. He is not a master because he has received a certificate from a school, or because he has been appointed successor by a grandmaster. He is sui generis.*"

[www.rapidjournal.com/Articles/pdf/Filipino_Martial_Tradition.pdf] It's no surprise that one topic that comes up on the FMA Forum now and again is when and how to teach.

One of the first who signed up on the FMA Forum asks "*How do you teach? This question is more on how your master taught you when you were a student of his or her. Now, you have your own school and student. Do you teach the way he teaches you?*" [www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=487]

Any teacher in any discipline at one time or another will have to deal with slow learners. How does one deal with them when teaching FMA? Will making him do more repetitions be enough, will he require special treatment? Useful tips can be found on this thread... [www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=660]

Another issue that seems to give some FMA teachers problems is teaching left-handed students. Some teachers force students to use their right hand. The late grandmaster Ben Lema of Lightning Scientific Arnis was a well known leftie, yet he taught right-handed people. I asked about him and training lefties in general more than two years ago on the forum. You can find the old thread here... [www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=88].

How do you teach a student who is experienced in other martial arts? Do you ask them to "empty the cup" or do you work with what they already know? The question gets asked here... [www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=1906].

Is it right to punish erring FMA students in this day and age? If a student comes in late, should he be asked to do extra drills or repetitions? Are punishments seen as such, or are they just part of body conditioning? Follow the discussion here... [www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=2259]

When the time comes and you are ready to teach, is it better to teach or try to pick up a new system to add to your repertoire? [www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=2566]

As always, you don't need to sign-up on the FMA Forum to read the threads mentioned above. You do need to sign-up if you wish to add to the discussion. If you do sign-up, feel free to say hi.

Volume5 No.2

Relevance of FMA in a Modern Civilized World

In February 2005, a practitioner of Atienza Kali was convicted of manslaughter for killing a bouncer trying to enforce New York's anti-smoking laws in a Manhattan nightclub. When the story was posted on the FMA Forum, it generated a lot of discussion [www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=693].

A few weeks back, someone posted the story again, but this time it was to ask something different...

"My friend, who's into Aikido were in a friendly debate concerning this article. Reflecting through it made me ask myself the following questions:

- 1) *FMA is a no nonsense effective battlefield martial art no doubt, but how does it fit the peaceful life of a typical city professional living in a "peaceful" city?*
- 2) *Sokaku Takeda, one of the pioneers of the martial art we now know as Aikido was told by his teacher that "the time of the sword is over" and it was said that this statement greatly influences his method of teaching as he started to evolve his martial art and focus on that of empty hand techniques after this.*
- 3) *Other martial arts would boast not of battle efficiency, but that which develops the character of the practitioner. Do you think FMA should evolve into a martial art such as that, and lose some of its so called "brutality" so to speak, in order to be accepted in the modern world?"*

In today's modern civilized world, does it make sense to train like a warrior if you're not in the military or involved in law enforcement. Part of the draw of FMA is its effective no-nonsense approach to combat. But what are the odds that a civilian will be faced in a life or death combat situation within his or her lifetime? As the poster said, is FMA in its current form still relevant? Feel free to discuss over at [www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=2981].

One thing that the story above highlights is that bladed weapons are always a concern with regards to law enforcement. The balisong has always been associated with FMA. Unfortunately, it has also been associated with thugs and criminals. A Finnish law enforcement offers consults the FMA Forum on the uses of the balisong [www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=2071].

Related to the topic of making FMA relevant in modern day society, one question keeps cropping up. Should Fi be a mandatory course in Philippine schools [www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=421]?

One thing I have to say is that FMA is a living art. It is a continually evolving and changing thing, adapting to the times while staying true to its traditional foundation. I don't believe FMA will become irrelevant any time soon.

Volume5 No.3

Differing Opinions

I was going to write about the upgrades made to bulletin board software that the FMA Forum uses. However, there has been a recent flurry of activity on the forum due to a new member pushing her opinions that differ from most of the other members. Unfortunately, her attitude isn't exactly endearing.

One of the most common comments made about the FMA forum community is that it displays a high level of maturity. On some other forums, threads tend to evolve into flame wars, pissing matches, and senseless bickering. It doesn't mean that the FMA Forum doesn't experience such things. It does, but not to the same extent as in other forums.

The overall friendly atmosphere of the FMA Forum is due to the fact that the forum was meant to be mainly a forum for Filipino practitioners, even though foreigners are very much welcome. The forum started with mostly Filipino members so the discussions basically reflect Filipino culture and the way Filipinos relate to each other.

While FMA is known to be direct when it comes to fighting, Filipinos in general are not direct when it comes to communicating to one another. A Filipino will not directly tell another Filipino "you're wrong!" Filipinos in general will try to avoid hurting other people's feelings or making other people lose face.

In a community as diverse as the FMA community, differences in opinion are to be expected. There are unspoken rules in the FMA Forum on how to espouse a differing opinion.

1. Don't write with the attitude "I'm right and you're wrong because I say so". Simply state your position and explain your stand; why you believe in your position and what you've found to back it up.
2. Give due respect to dissenters. Don't assume that the people you're talking to are ignorant, stupid or nothing more than mindless sheep who've drank their master's kool-aid. There's a reason they believe what they believe and it's important to understand where they're coming from.
3. If you want people to be open-minded, return the courtesy. If you want people to accept the possibility that you might be right, you must first accept the possibility that you might be wrong.
4. When trying to convince others of your ideas, don't be belligerent. Remember, you're trying to sell your idea. No salesman ever closed a sale by fighting with his customer.

From my experience, these guidelines go a long way in making yourself heard, not only on the FMA Forum but in other forms as well. I have more on this topic, and I wrote a post titled "Watermelons, Yumburgers, and Kali" which you can find at: (www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=3259).

Volume5 No.4

Learning FMA and Filipino Culture

There is long running topic over on the FMA Forum titled “Do foreign FMA students really need to learn our culture as well?” Subject title is self explanatory, but let me quote the original poster:

“Of course many foreign students of FMA get into the system because of the exotic nature of the systems. The same for those who like Japanese systems, Thai martial arts, etc. They want the whole "experience" of FMA; martial skills, culture, the food, etc.”

“But there are also those who feel that they don't need to know Filipino culture to learn and be good at FMAs. They just want the fighting techniques, that all. If something can't make them fight better, they don't need to know it. FMA could be an Eskimo martial art and they couldn't care less.”

“So I ask the locals here: do you feel that FMA must be learned along with our culture? If so, what will that cultural education provide the student? What value is it to them?”

Being a Filipino and a teacher of FMA, I want my students to excel in the art and that teaching the culture goes a long way in helping the student achieve that goal. However, I may be biased towards my own culture so I'd rather quote some non-Filipinos who posted on the thread:

“I was pretty good at the fighting side to the art way before I ever travelled to the Philippines, but even after my first trip to the PI and experienced the culture first hand only then did I truly appreciate the art and all it has to offer. Yes I try to educate my students to some degree about the culture but I always advise them that to truly experience the culture you have to go to the PI, this will give you an whole new outlook about the art too. Will it make you better at it? I don't know but I believe it will help you understand it more.”

“I will be the first to admit, my trips to the Philippines and my appreciation of the culture has made me a better instructor and helped me and my students understand the art in a whole new light.”

“You can tell if an instructor has been to the Philippines and taken on board the whole culture behind the art and those that have not. Their whole approach to the art and how it is done is different, not different in a way that a non FMAer notices, they just see sticks flying etc, but to those that do the art there is a difference that is noticeable.”

“I personally find it very important to learn the culture of your craft. How is one to understand the how if he cannot embrace the why? I absolutely love the Philippine culture..the food, the customs, the arts, the language (which I am currently studying).”

Have more to add? Hop on to the fmaforum.org and go to www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=3159 to add your opinion.

Volume6 No.1

What if you don't have a stick?

In the Philippines, Arnis / Eskrima / Kali is generally seen by common man on the street as primarily a stick art. Anyone who says that he practices the art is eventually asked the question, "What if you don't have a stick?" On the FMA Forum, there's a thread

on the topic in our FAQ board. The thread can be found at **www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=4**.

One way to answer the question above is to say that the armed techniques also apply to armed techniques. However, I've heard some old masters reply by saying that they would never be caught without a weapon, nor would they allow an opponent to disarm them. One member commented on the FMA Forum that he seldom sees any stick disarms done in sparring matches and asks if stick disarms are impossible to do in real life situations. You can follow the discussion at **www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=3752**.

Another interesting question came up on the forums. Do you prefer open-hand or closed-fist striking? Long time forum member Raul asks the question at **www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=3761**.

Long-time practitioners of Arnis / Kali / Eskrima, as well as FMA Forum regulars know that unarmed combat is part of their respective system's repertoire. However, discussion of unarmed combat in Filipino martial arts often includes unarmed Filipino martial artists such as Sikaran, Yaw-Yan, and Silat. One of these unarmed Filipino martial arts that has been receiving a lot of attention lately is Dumog. An old thread on Dumog at **www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=782** asks "What's up with grappling in Filipino martial arts?" The thread was started in July 12, 2006 and has been picking up steam again.

Still on Dumog, a new member recently posted this claim...

"...sad to say Dumog was initially developed by our world war 2 veterans to counter Japanese soldiers assault... as a practitioner of the Filipino martial arts my grandfather taught me one thing ... charge like a bull and kill instantly...techniques are only practiced in the dojos but in real fight you only use one or two... FYI. Dumog was patterned also on our very own water buffalo 'carabao' / 'tamaraws'."

The above post caused a bit of a stir on the FMA Forum. Some asked for more information. Other staunchly disagree with the poster's assertion. The ongoing Discussion can be found at **www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=3796**.

Volume6 No.2

Filipino FMA Terminology

I find it ironic that at a time that Filipino Congressmen are pushing to have English as the sole medium of instruction in our public school system, we get foreign Filipino martial arts practitioners over at the FMA Forum asking about Filipino FMA terminology.

A common question is what the Filipino / Tagalog / Cebuano / etc. word for a particular term is. A recent example is a post made by a member asking for the Filipino term for a dojo

[**www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=3917**]. For most Filipinos, this is a perplexing question since traditional training is done in any available open space. Yuli

Romo uses the term "hapag sanayan" as a transliteration of "training hall", but students of Master Yuli will attest that they've never practiced in a training hall under him.

Another post asks the proper way of using certain phrases in a particular Filipino language

[www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=3623]:

"I need help in proper grammer with terminolgy I want to say this: (English)This place is where we honor the older brothers who came before. (Cebuano) Kini daupit mao ang asa kita kadungganang ang manongs kinsa abot kanhi. My Cebuano is limited, so I am giving it my best."

Considering that there are more than a hundred living languages in the Philippines, it comes to no surprise that even hardcore Filipino FMAers are stumped when asked about the meaning or etymology of some commonly used terms. An example is a post asking about the meaning of "Hirada Batangueña"

[www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=3873].

In a previous article, I mentioned a post examining the question, "Why are FMA terms in Spanish?" [www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=6]. While the post eventually turned into a debate on the origins of FMA, the first few pages contain posts about Filipino terms that have been supplanted by Spanish ones.

If you have any questions on Filipino terminology in Filipino martial arts, or any question about Filipino martial arts for that matter, feel free to post on **fmaforum.org**. Also, if for some reason you are not comfortable posting on a public forum, you could always send me an e-mail at **robbie@rtrinidad.com** and I'll post for you along with my personal response.

Hanggang sa susunod (Until next time).

Volume6 No.3

FMA in MMA

Once in a while, a thread pops up on the FMA Forum boards that gets' a lot of responses. A few days ago, someone asked this question...

"Do you think it really is possible to incorporate FMA techniques in MMA competitions? I know that not all our methodologies are not acceptable based on most MMA tournament rules. And another question, how do you think can we add the "Filipino flavor"... how do you think can we show off the artistic side which is truly Pinoy? I mean, we immediately recognize that it is Muay Thai, or judo, or BJJ."

The opinions expressed varied to quite a degree. Here's a bit of a sampling:

- "Actually FMA is starting to be implemented in MMA, although the main styles used are Yaw-Yan, and Balintawak. AEK (Arnis Escrima Kali) is seldom employed in its own element due to the basis being a bladed or weaponized fighting system. However they are still used to make a fighter better."

- "FMA is primarily a weapons based art. Its empty hands' striking isn't as powerful or direct as Boxing, Muay Thai, Karate (or any other striking specialized art) and its grappling doesn't even approach the sophistication of western wrestling, judo, Sambo or BJJ."
- "Sometimes it is also nice not to let people know it is FMA."
- "Yes, I've tried it in MMA - I lost, but anyway, on the fight card, my team representation would state Yaw-Yan-Buno. Yaw-Yan for my striking and my grappling/ground training from URCC's team Buno. - all Filipino-made, and I'm proud of it."
- "FMA was the original MMA. The Filipino masters always took the best of what everyone had to offer and made it their own since the beginning when fighting was life or death and not a sport. Now let's get back to the sport aspect of MMA. Filipino Martial Arts training was used on the onset of the MMA scene when there were no rules. Don Frye the Champion of UFC 8 & 9 was trained in FMA by Filipino Martial Artist Dr. Russell Harris (brother of Ron Harris Classic Eskrima) as evidenced by his use of elbows."
- "Most if not all weapon-based FMA won't last a minute inside octagon without getting knocked/choked/tapped out."
- "...you always need to adjust yourself to whatever form of competition you will be joining. You can't expect to win without the right preparation. That is where adaptability comes to play. You can use whatever skills or techniques in FMA that you have and incorporate it in your training. With that you can at least come-up with a game plan on how to take MMA's challenge."

Do you agree or disagree with any of the above posts? Follow the discussion at www.fmaforum.org/index.php?showtopic=4200 and don't hesitate to voice your own opinion.

Volume6 No.4

The FMA Forum Turns Five

On October 4, 2009, the Filipino Martial Arts Forum will celebrate its 5th Anniversary. I've never brought up past anniversaries on the forum, but five seems like a nice number to celebrate.

So much has happened over the past five years. Our membership has gone past 1,500 registered members (give or take a couple hundred spam bots and sock puppets), with around 65,000 posts made. We're still relatively small as far as other online communities go, but I dare say that in the past five years, FMAForum.org has established itself as the place to go online if you want to know more about Filipino martial arts.

The Pinoy Eskrima Arnis Kali Mailing List (PEAK-L)

The idea for an online forum for Filipino martial artists didn't start with the FMA Forum. Way back in 1998, I was frustrated with the fact that most sources of information on the Filipino martial arts that can be found on the Internet were from sources outside of the Philippines. At the time, I was a member of the Eskrima-Digest (E-D) mailing list.

On April of that year, I started the Pinoy Eskrima Arnis Kali Mailing List (PEAK-L) on E-groups, which would later become Yahoo Groups. My goal wasn't to compete

with E-D, but to provide a venue on the Internet for Filipinos practicing their own art. Who better to talk about the Filipino martial arts than Filipinos?

The Birth of the Filipino Martial Arts Forum

Around 2003, it was getting quite difficult to manage PEAK-L due to spam. I decided I would try my hand at setting up an electronic bulletin board. From a technical standpoint, setting one up wasn't difficult. All I needed was a hosting service and a free open-source bulletin board software package. What I didn't know was how much resources were needed to keep a bulletin board running.

By mid-2004, I was in-between jobs and I had a lot of time on my hands. It seemed like a good idea to start an FMA bulletin board. I decided to abandon the PEAK name since I wanted to include other Filipino martial arts like Sikaran, Silat, Yaw-Yan, etc. So, I decided on the more generic "Filipino Martial Arts Forum".

On October 4, 2004, I opened the FMA Forum to registrations and announced it on PEAK-L. A good number of the first members of the FMAF community came from PEAK-L. There was also another source of members. Over on PinoyExchange.com, there was an active thread on FMA. Word spread on that forum that a dedicated bulletin board for Filipino FMAers was up and running, active posters on that thread quickly signed up on the FMAF.

The following year, I received notice from my web hosting provider that the FMAF was eating up too server processing power. I moved the FMAF to a dedicated bulletin board hosting provider which is its current home.

Gathering Momentum

Much of the success the FMAF had in the past year was due to the FMAF community. Case in point is what has been known as the FMA Gatherings held at the University of the Philippines.

The FMA Picnic as it was first called was the brainchild of Jon Escudero of Lightning Scientific Arnis. He wanted a way for Filipino martial arts practitioners to meet each other in a non-competitive setting. Through the FMAF, such gatherings were organized where eventually Filipino martial arts Grandmasters would attend and give demos on their respective systems. Among those who attended were Rommel Tortal (Pekiti Tarsia), Yuli Romo (Bahad Zubu), Bob Silver Tabimina (Tabimina Balintawak), Jesus Pallorina and Frank Sobrino (WEDO), Rodel Dagooc (Modern Arnis), Bambit Dulay (Modern Arnis), Jerry Evangelisan (Dekiti Tirsias Serradas), and many others.

The Future

I owe my interest in the Filipino martial arts to my first Filipino martial arts teacher who showed me the richness of what the Filipino martial arts has to offer. His name is Sioc Glaraga of Kalaki Eskrima. If it wasn't for him, I probably wouldn't have started PEAK-L and FMAF. One question he usually asks me is "What's the next step for the FMAF?" Normally, I usually just shrug my shoulders. What drives the FMAF is the FMAF community and it is they who will shape its future. As far as online communities go, the FMAF online community is one of the most mature I've seen.

If you haven't visited the FMA Forum yet, go and sign up at www.fmaforum.org. We'd really like to have you along for the next five years.

See you there!



Volume5 No.3

This is what I anticipate will become the first of a series of articles for the FMA Digest. These are basically opinion pieces, snapshots that reflect what is currently on my mind concerning FMA. I don't consider my opinions exceptional; I'm simply someone who likes to write and is fortunate to have found a niche to express a point of view. Who I am reflects my experiences, so a bit of personal background is probably in order.

My father was editor and publisher at a couple of daily metropolitan newspapers, hence my early indoctrination in the value of the written word. His position afforded him opportunities to meet and befriend people like Dwight Eisenhower and Carlos Romulos.

(For those unfamiliar with Carlos Romulos, he was a genuine Filipino hero, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist who rose to general in WWII as a chief member of MacArthur's staff, and who later became president of the UN general assembly and then Philippine ambassador to the U.S.)

My father's work resulted in our family spending a couple of months in Asia in 1966 when I was 11, including time in the Philippines. There I got to watch groups practicing arnis in Rizal Park in Manila, my introduction to these arts, and I still have the bolo and knife my father and I bought at Pangasinan Falls, my first espada y daga set.

This experience undoubtedly influenced later directions in my life. I earned a BA from UC Berkeley in History, focusing on 20th century Asia and more recently an MA from JFK University in Holistic Health Education, a multidisciplinary program in mind/body integration. I've since been certified as a hypnotherapist, drawing on both modern disciplines like NLP and more ancient ones such as Huna. These are all tools I

bring to my study of martial arts, and so the subjects I cover may range from training to current events to stories about the arts.

If I have anything to offer, it's a relatively long view of the FMA from the perspective of a non-Filipino, being a fairly early participant in the growth these arts have experienced here in the West. I was a charter member of WEKAF at the first tournament in Cebu in 1989, competing there and in Manila, and I sat in on the early developmental meetings for the USFMAF. Over the years I've written a lot about FMA topics on various online forums and digests and for some early publications such as the Eskrima Review. For over a decade I've maintained a website for my unique training sticks, and for the past three years I've kept a blog.

In 1989 I became the first person to successfully develop and market high-impact training sticks from modern synthetics, mostly because good rattan was hard to find and easy to split, and in 1998 I was inducted into the U.S. Filipino Martial Arts Hall of Fame in recognition of this contribution to the art. More recently I've begun shaping sparring-grade blades from the same materials, based on traditional sandata for FMA training.

The essence of the art is in the training, and there I have an Advanced Diploma from Grandmaster Angel Cabales, from whom I trained privately, and I'm a member of Tom Meadows' Latigo y Daga Association. There are lots of other folks with whom I've trained who may get mentioned here as well. I also have black belts in Kenpo, and some passing acquaintance in a few other arts. Such breadth of experience is not atypical in FMA. This is an art that draws in practitioners from other systems.

So how is it I've named this column after a Filipino food? Well, for starters, dinuguan is a favorite of mine, and just like the practice of the art, there are layers of complexity in a single simple dish. The first image that came to mind for naming the column was "stew" (and for this I blame publisher Steven Dowd, who pitched this column to me before lunch when my mind was on that thought).

When I looked up "stew" in some online translators, however, I found a lot of unfamiliar words either describing regional dishes or regional names for dishes. That immediately told me any choice would be limited. That's when I thought of dinuguan. Regardless of regional or ethnic background, it seems a word that is familiar to most Filipinos, so just as flavors blend together, there is a touch of unity in there.

For those who are unfamiliar with it, dinuguan is a stew made with pork. It is sometimes called "chocolate stew" because it also uses the animal's blood, creating a thick, dark brown sauce. Some people won't touch it because of the blood, forgetting such Western delicacies as German blood sausages, Russian steak tartar or English blood pudding, to say nothing of rare or medium hamburger or steak. Another notable ingredient in dinuguan is whole hot pepper, adding heat to the thick rich broth. These qualities mirror my impressions of the FMA; flavorful and complex with just a few key ingredients and isn't hot and bloody a perfect metaphor for the martial arts at its most real.

Dinuguan has another FMA connection for me because I associate it with Angel Cabales and my private training with him in Stockton. We would frequently go out to lunch, either before working out or as a break between sessions. He often took me to Filipino restaurants, particularly those with buffets. Here he would visit with old associates and show off a student from out of town, while I'd get to try various Filipino

dishes and answer questions about my marital status. While I may have had dinuguan before these experiences, it is certainly where I have my first fond memories of it.

Of course, Angel's motivations weren't completely altruistic in going to these restaurants. The food was so good, I'd always enjoy myself thoroughly, and Angel would encourage me to eat well. He himself would rarely eat, though, or only in very moderate amounts. The net result of this would be that I would get full and sluggish before training while Angel felt light and energetic. Eventually I learned to eat less, staying a bit hungry and wanting more. Perhaps that too has is a metaphor for my longevity in the arts.

Finally, there is the oddity factor of someone from outside a culture partaking of it in relatively obscure ways. I recall one of the first meetings of the original board of directors for any WEKAF division in the U.S. back in 1989 at Rusty Palapo's house in Dixon, where I was "challenged" to eat balut. I don't know if everyone else there ate some, but it was a dare that wasn't to be turned down. Frankly, it bored me, and I'd had it before, but then I don't care much for hard-boiled eggs any way.

Dinuguan, on the other hand, elicits a very different response because ordering it always seems to catch folk by surprise. "You eat dinuguan?!" is an expression I've heard dozens of times, often from the same people at the same restaurants, week after week. They are somehow astounded that someone, an outsider to be exact, would know of such a dish let alone request it!

Practicing Escrima sometimes feels like that too. It's not something widely known to the general public, and even within Filipino culture FMA can seem somewhat obscure. There are two responses I typically get when mentioning my involvement, either a blank stare lacking comprehension or a look of guarded surprise. The bottom line for all these activities therefore doesn't come from outward recognition but from the joy of participation and the sense of freedom in movement.

These days I teach a few students to keep active, still learning as much from them as they do from me. It's the simple things that attract me. As one of my teachers counseled me years ago, there are no advanced techniques in martial arts, just basics done better. Like good stew that takes time for the flavors to come together, I've seen great teachers do more with less as they get older, so I hope to keep marinating in the art and turning up the heat.

Volume5 No.4

Titleitis

Back when I was a kid, in an almost unimaginably distant era before color TVs or astronauts, a martial art black belt was a rare and exotic level of achievement. 4th degree or higher belts belonged almost exclusively to recent Asian transplants here in the West, and grandmasters were as rare as hen's teeth, while the number of recognized 10th degree black belts worldwide could probably be counted on one's fingers.

The 1970's saw an explosive growth in popularity of the martial arts, fueled in no small part by the screen presence of Bruce Lee. By the 1980's, black belts were as common as road signs, and you weren't anybody if the number of stripes on your belt didn't exceed the decades you'd been alive.

Pretty quickly the race to outdo the competition surpassed the growth in the arts, which leveled off into the 90's. Martial art movies had become mundane, and without anyone with the superstar status to replace Bruce Lee, public attention moved on to other things.

This put the squeeze on the business, which was becoming more top-heavy as up-and-coming practitioners fought to establish their credentials as experts in the field.

Organizations grew and then splintered; creating rival structures that sought to outdo each other in glitter if not substance. As strip-mall dojos became common, each strove for distinction with the credentials of their instructors.

The FMA bucked this trend for a long time, perhaps because they never appealed to the mass market and there are few schools dedicated just to them. While still relatively unknown, however, FMA have grown significantly in the past 20 years, fueled by the popularity of seminars and development of worldwide organizations and competitions. Nowadays it's not uncommon to go to a seminar where half a dozen people in the room are Masters and Grandmasters, and true seniors in the art are referred to as Great-Grandmaster, a title I'd never heard anywhere until this past decade.

What does this mean to the art? Are there really that many practitioners who are truly exalted in skill and experience? That's an argument that can cut both ways. As more people practice and teach, the increased exposure has created new growth where it didn't exist before. On the other hand, the old ways of the art were much more underground, a secretive set of skills for living in hard times and places. Practitioners might not have claimed titles, but their skills were legitimized by the fact of survival. In Darwinistic terms, survival of the fittest ensured propagation of the art.

The focus on titles and certificates is relatively new in the FMA. When I first got involved in the early 1980's, there were basically Guros and Masters, and even here in California, not many of either to be found. Recent articles, such as the recent FMA Digest special edition written by Mara Nepomuceno, corroborate this, stating "*the art does not make use of official rankings as other martial arts do. Practitioners are either students or teachers, there is no in-between.*" (pg. 40-41) and "*it is unheard of for an Eskrima Master to proclaim himself 'the 10th degree Master of Rabid Dog Arnis appointed by the Grandmaster' or something to that degree. Ironically, students of Eskrima become Masters only by self-appointment. The traditional Eskrimador only begins to teach when he feels he is ready to do so, because the traditional Eskrima Master would never appoint him as successor no matter how able the student is.*" (pgs. 63-64). Thus the recent trend towards focusing on hierarchical rankings and certifications seems an aspect of commercialization created for the Western market, and not necessarily for the betterment of the art itself.

There are a few socially preferable ways to attain titles. These include recognition of peers through contributions to the art; promotion or successor ship, either by bloodline or designation, within a system; or through development of a recognizable system which organically grows and promotes successive generations of practitioners and teachers from within, just like one must be a parent before becoming a grandparent.

Ironically, the most controversial method is the self-proclaimed Master or Grandmaster, due to abuse by those motivated solely by ego, but even here, in the oft-quoted words of Tom Bolden, "Skill is rank," reflecting the older ways when challenges could mean life or death. Meanwhile, someone has to be first for there to be a lineage,

and new systems are always evolving from the old, reflecting the dynamism embedded within the FMA culture. As Bruce Lee might have said, “the tradition of no tradition.” Regardless of method of attainment, success without skills will only be a fleeting achievement. Before any of us earned titles, we were all just practitioners. Who can look at a class of beginners and say, without prejudice, which one will someday be a master of the art? While many may have dreams of glory at the outset, few endure the years of sweat and pain without more realistic goals than hopes of claiming elusive honors or prestige. If there is a saving grace to the FMA, it is that it is still in essence a combative art, based on applied skill and performance, and not a place where “paper tigers” can safely reside.

Volume6 No.1

Skilled practitioners of Filipino martial arts are keenly attuned to the concept of flow. Continuity of motion and the ability to make adjustments on the fly play a large part in defining characteristics found throughout the various styles of Filipino martial arts, and which contribute to making them so effective and practical.

Attributes supporting the ability to flow include awareness, positioning and timing. While these are valuable qualities in a fighting art, are they not equally useful in many other areas of life? People often speak of martial arts as contributing lessons to other areas of life. How might we realize this in a practical and consequential manner?

Perhaps the most dangerous activity most of us encounter on a daily basis, one with potential life or death consequences, is driving. It is such a familiar activity that once we become accustomed to it, we take it for granted, yet every day a price is paid by some for lack of attention or carelessness. I’ve long considered driving to be a legitimate martial exercise, guiding tons of machinery at varying speeds through rivers of steel and concrete. To drive well requires mental focus and agility, combined with physical precision and control. For better or worse, the results speak for themselves.

Most accidents are known to happen within a few miles of home. Aside from the fact this is where most of our driving takes place, it is where we allow familiarity to lull us into complacency. We see a street as it exists in our mind every day, a tendency that slows our reaction when the unexpected occurs. New and unfamiliar surroundings elicit a higher level of conscious attention.

This was impressed on me after a trip to the Philippines in 1989. While I myself didn’t drive while there, just seeing the differences provided insight into the way martial arts evolved in that cultural environment. I wrote at that time of my experience in Cebu: “Traffic. It’s different in the Philippines. An American wouldn’t have a chance here. Drive down the street on the wrong side. It’s o.k. And you can do it at night without headlights. That’s o.k. too. Wanna run a red light? As long as you can squeeze through, feel free to try.

It’s no wonder that the martial arts of this country are so good. The whole culture is geared towards keen reflexes and awareness. The flow here is not just a martial art concept, it’s a pervasive energy that one experiences continuously in daily life. Filipinos don’t rush like Americans. It is not the speed at which things are done, but the intricacy

with which they are interwoven that marks the character of the islands. Walking, driving, fighting or just hanging out, Filipinos are always engaged in a dance with life.”

Most of us can't (or shouldn't) drive like this where we live, but for those interested in honing superior driving skills, an excellent, fun, and relatively inexpensive way to gain experience (without getting a ticket from John Law) is autocross racing, also known in the U.S. as Solo II. For costs not much more than most martial art classes, one can race the family car against the clock on a weekend. I've joked that it's a great way to train for driving a bank robbery getaway car, but seriously, there are professionals from big-ticket racing like NASCAR who will drop in to autocross occasionally because the specific reflex and accuracy skills required translate into better driving on the track and on daily streets as well.

What this has in common with good martial arts is efficiency. Good times on the course require from economy of motion, which result not only from control of speed and power but also the ability to think ahead. This is just as true on one's feet as in a car. Some years ago I ran an agility course as part of testing for a job. Although I was the oldest person in a field of 120, I ran the fourth fastest time simply because I understood how to set up my footwork to apex a turn or approaching an obstacle. These are timing skills I learned as a youth running cross-country races and skiing, and the principles are the same for martial arts.

While there are many martial artists who give lip service to the benefits to be gained from their training, such as discipline, focus or even morality, these are intangibles. Valuable as they may be, they exist mainly in the realm of the mind. The Filipino martial arts are grounded in more practical demonstrations of value. While specific techniques are taught, what is truly important is, understanding the underlying principles because these are what will allow us to respond creatively to our environment rather than relying on rote memory or past experience.

Volume6 No2

Setting Training Goals for 2009

I'm not usually big on making resolutions for the New Year but I decided to make an extra effort to see that 2009 is a year of solid improvements for my students and myself. Here are some questions that might help you set and achieve new goals. If you take some time to think about these points, perhaps you too will be inspired to step up your personal commitment to progress in martial arts.

How often do you train? Is this regularly? Is the frequency great enough to build skills, just enough to maintain them, or barely enough to remember them? When you are learning new skills, repetition is important, so creating short mini-practices, even 10-15 minutes several times a day, can aid memory retention and neurological programming. Advanced practitioners generally benefit more from longer sessions that allow them to loosen up and flow, but when time is a factor, even then there are hidden moments in a day to sneak in a bit of extra practice.

Do you have an instructor or a coach, someone with greater skills or experience, or are you practicing with folks at your own level? A balance of both would be my suggestion, especially if it means making more time for training. Good instructors give us

direction and insight, without which we can waste time and effort, while a solid workout partner is invaluable for honing those lessons between classes. If you work out with people less skilled than yourself, your test is to find ways to elevate them. When they can challenge you, then you grow together.

Do you train across a wide variety of methods, such as drills, flow sparring, live sparring, empty hands, grappling, kicks, blades, flexible weapons, etc? To what extent is your practice based on core techniques versus concepts? How you define the goals of your program? Self-defense tends to focus on down and dirty tactics to end a fight quickly, while tournament competitors spend much more time on conditioning and timing for the ring.

Do you do supplementary exercise such as running, swimming, yoga or weight training? Strength, speed, flexibility and endurance are interrelated, but each has different requirements. Nobody is equally good in all areas. Do you train to maximize your strengths or to strengthen your weaknesses? There's no clear-cut right answer to that either.

How about iron body (impact resistance) conditioning? There are few people who are skilled enough to avoid ever getting hit, and those who are, probably got hit more than a few times to become that good. Boxers, wrestlers and football players aren't dangerous just because of their skill or size but also because they are toughened by continuous contact in training. Resistance to pain takes mental resilience as well.

How long or intense are your sessions? Do you get a good physical workout? When you finish do you feel a sense of accomplishment? Being confused or frustrated isn't necessarily a bad thing either, if you use it as motivation to push forward. We all have good days and bad.

How far are you willing to travel to train? Some folks think across town is too far. I traveled 150 miles round trip to train with Angel Cabales. Others fly around the world to visit a teacher. If you really want something, you'll find a way to make it happen. Some opportunities to train with people may only come once, though not everybody realizes this.

How much are you willing to pay? The best program for you may or may not be expensive, but then of what value is lesser instruction? Your true cost can include time and other commitments, not just money.

Similarly, do you go to seminars? If so, are these with instructors from the style you already practice, or do you expose yourself to different styles? It can take courage to step outside one's comfort zone, but then you had to start somewhere to get where you are now!

When I began looking for FMA, there were few schools and fewer seminars. Nowadays we have access to an amazing array of talented instructors. The goal in attending seminars is rarely to switch styles or learn a whole new system, but rather to expose ourselves to different ideas and methods.

If I learn even one new idea at a seminar, I consider that a day well spent. The lesson learned isn't necessarily the most obvious either. As an instructor, I'm as interested in how the other person teaches as in what is being taught. There are many intangible qualities behind mastery of a craft, and those have to be experienced directly to be fully appreciated.

If you already are a teacher, have you yourself done seminars or public demonstrations? These are opportunities to recruit, along with ways to break up the routine of training your students while giving them performance goals and a chance to see them deal with stress. If they cannot perform in public, how would they fight for real?

The same goes for tournaments. Some look down on these as diluting the true art, but if competition has a place as a step or tool along the road to mastery, then one can see the values of finding the courage and commitment to face the intensity of the ring. Win or lose, I always considered a match an opportunity to learn about myself and how to handle the event.

Finally, do you ever just visit or practice with other schools or styles? Do you do this openly or do you have to keep this hidden in any way, your training affected by politics?

One thing I'd like to see is more informal sharing of teaching between schools, where instructors are invited to teach each other's classes from time to time. This kind of grassroots exchange doesn't cost anything and provides a chance for students to see things with a fresh eye.

Such cross training with other arts outside the FMA can provide powerful insights as well. An empty hand fighter might feel at home with our tactics and have fresh input to offer from his perspective. This should be no surprise to anyone who has read the many biographies in different issues of the FMA Digest. Many of the top people in this field have distinguished themselves in more than one combative method. That in itself should be a key to keeping an open mind in training. Look for the relationships between different arts, and you will also discover the distinctions that make each unique.

Volume6 No.3

“Unity”

Unity! It's a word I've long heard bantered about within the FMA community, but like a pretty girl who never seems to get invited out on dates, it just seems to sit there waiting for a chance to be the life of the party. There's a saying that “the difference between theory and practice is that in theory, there is no difference.” Well, in practice unity seems to apply only if everyone is already in agreement or if people band together against some outside threat. The differences that exist within the Filipino martial arts often seem mostly to be on the micro level of personality, and with no outer enemy to overcome this has loomed large in the past.

While on the surface the FMA world seems to be reaching a broader consensus of cooperation, how deep does it go? The internet fashion of social networking online has led to a plethora of choices, from groups on Yahoo or Myspace to more targeted sites like MyFMA or MartialArtFriends. Still, as focus becomes diffused, it loses effectiveness. Who has time to keep up with all the choices, or wants to engage in the same discussions in so many different places? And while the ability to communicate globally has come within the reach of anyone with a computer, how meaningful are most local event notices when sent to all corners of the globe?

There are many organizations vying for preeminent leadership, but if each is striving for similar goals independently, it seems an inherent contradiction in purpose.

I've heard so many people talk about how they are going to unify the arts, but aren't there others already attempting to do so? How will these new efforts be different? Would it not be more effective to combine efforts towards common goals? Sometimes it seems as though there are as many "world" organizations as most have members, like a mighty river divided into many smaller rivulets.

Groups that are built primarily around one style struggle to draw membership from other styles. Meanwhile, those organizations that seek to promote the Filipino martial arts on a broader basis face mistrust and jealousy. What their detractors don't seem to realize is that by boycotting tournaments and seminars because of such biases, they themselves bear at least some of the responsibility for the imbalances they decry. Perhaps the most effective and maybe satisfying, way to break down barriers is to actually get out and interact with others who share similar interests; in this case, a passion for the Filipino martial arts.

There is a yin and a yang to this idea of everyone getting along, because when things fall apart, there is room for growth and creativity in the chaos. When unity means everyone thinks and acts the same way that can be stifling and oppressive, so when we talk about unifying the Filipino martial arts, we need to be clear and careful in what we wish for. If we truly live the principles of our art and learn to flow, then we can find freedom to be ourselves and still come together as a whole without losing our own identities.

Volum6 No.4

Paradoxical Musings

Paradoxes are seemingly contradictory statements that may nonetheless be true. Our lives probably contain many examples, though most remain unconscious and unexamined so long as they don't create enough conflict as to rise to conscious attention. Every culture and subculture contains its own set of paradoxes. Does everybody recognize these themes?

"Our style is unique" and "We have that too." These are perfect examples because both can indeed be true, but (paradoxically) can be used to obscure the truth. Everybody has an armbar or a wristlock, but does everyone do it exactly the same way? If you think your knowledge is already complete, will you really pay attention when someone else is sharing their version of a technique? Considering the ways different people might react, knowledge is power, and it's good to have options.

A positive approach is to appreciate the differences but understand the principles. The first enhances your knowledge; the second enhances skill. Intuition connects the two, and activation at that level enters a zone where one simply flows.

The other side of our verbal paradox is if these are simply arguments to shut down communication. Regardless of one's skill, it is presumptive to think one has achieved the sum of all possible knowledge. Many Masters in various disciplines, from dance to music to martial arts, have acknowledged learning something new from a beginner; treat the source of knowledge as a gift. You may not want or need to learn another style, but a fighter must be a strategist. Shouldn't one be curious what others do?

The Filipino martial arts have built-in shortcuts, such as the use of angles to group attacks. Though systems of angles vary, understanding the principle behind them facilitates learning. Since there are only so many ways the human body can move, variations fall into things like timing, range, and strategy. Thus, “everybody has it” but “we do it this way”.

Regional styles may share common roots and demonstrate similar attributes, even use the same training patterns and drills. Sometimes, though, rivalries and politics cause people to deny what may appear obvious to others. Recently, for instance, I exchanged comments with someone who took offense because I complimented a video of a Grandmaster he admires. I said the movement reminded me of my own teacher, high praise in my mind.

What I encountered is another paradox in the arts, a belief that something will only work if “we” do it, but not when someone else does it. He proclaimed I was wrong to find any similarities between what I had watched and what I had been taught. Moreover, he insisted that our style “wouldn’t work” though the technique is virtually identical to the one he was defending!

This reveals a bit of schizophrenia about the direction people believe the FMA should be going. Paradoxically, while the art is expanding with growth worldwide, there are still those who prefer that it should remain a closely guarded treasure. Some believe it should still be taught only within the Filipino community, which itself has varying codes of secrecy such as keeping things within the family or a close-knit brotherhood. Even more radical in the case of this individual, he seemed to think that the only version of the art with merit was that taught on Philippine soil. Because my teacher emigrated to the West and taught there, somehow in his mind this severs the link to the homeland and renders the concepts of the art invalid.

I hate to burst the guy’s bubble, but knowledge is not limited by such artificial boundaries such as nationality or race. As one teacher who trained several police departments in Manila said to me in surprise back in 1989, “I didn’t know such a sophisticated style was found in the U.S.!” My reply was simply “We have old Filipino Grandmasters too.”

Just as any seed will grow when planted in a nourishing environment, Filipino martial arts are flourishing where they have been planted. To think that the fruits of such labor will not feed those who partake of it is merely denial, and a lack of faith in the spirit of the art itself to take hold wherever it goes.

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"Learning is the gate, not the house. When you see the gate, don't think it is the house. You have to go through the gate to get to the house behind it." -- Yagyu Munenori





By Luis Rafael C. Lledo, Jr.
www.amara-arkanis.com

Volume5 No.3

Beginning the next issue we will have a Feature Column about the Filipino Fighting Art of **Amara Arkanis** and its Founder **Mataw Guro Louelle Lledo, Jr.** Unlike other regular articles, the focus of this feature column will be on the aspect of the Program of Filipino Fighting Arts Education, which will be presented in series.

Part I of the program will deal with the Basic Phase or Foundation. There will be five lessons in the Basic Phase: Breathing, Stance, Classification of strikes, and Angles of strikes. Part 2 will deal with the Progressive Phase or the combination and application of the techniques.

This Course of Study, tested and Proven in the State Colleges and Universities Athletic Association Region IV (Southern Tagalog), is applicable to all styles and schools of the Filipino Fighting Arts. Even in the abbreviated form, this Course of Study will offer the beginner a step-by-step and methodical way of learning. Likewise, it will offer the advance practitioners a better understanding of the underlying principles of their own art.

This program of Filipino Fighting Arts Education was designed by Mataw Guro Louelle Lledo, Jr, who holds a Masters Degree in Physical Education, a licensed Medical Technologist, a Captain in the Philippine Air Force Reserves, a master in both Filipino and Japanese martial arts and the successor to the Bernarte Brokil sistemang Praksiyon.

Volume5 No.4

Part one: Basic/Foundation

Lesson one: Breathing

Proper breathing in any martial art, or any physical activity for that matter, is of utmost importance. However, most teachers of the Filipino fighting arts have relegated breathing in the background. There are even some who have ignored teaching proper breathing altogether. In AMARA ARKANIS, proper breathing is the first priority.

Breathing may be simply defined as a process made up of inhalation (taking air in) and exhalation (expelling air out).

In AMARA ARKANIS, the process may sound more complex. Instead of just taking the air in, inhalation is drawing into your body the universal energy, forging that energy in your personal anvil of training and expelling it out as a destructive or constructive force, depending on the need and intention. This exhalation may be vocalized, called bunyaw in Filipino. At this very instant all the energy of the body must be concentrated in the center of gravity transforming the whole body into a one solid unit by tucking the buttocks, pressing the shoulders, tightening the abdominal, back, sides, chest and leg muscles.

Training in proper breathing:

- Stand in natural parallel toe stance, feet spread hip width with hands hanging on the side
- Turn palms up and slowly inhale through the nose to chest level
- Hold breath for 5 seconds
- Turn palms down and slowly exhale through the mouth as you bring your hands down and bend your knees as you bring your center of gravity down
- When you have exhaled all the air in your body force one last exhalation
- Hold your breath for 5 seconds
- Straighten your knees as you turn your palms up to the level of your chest inhaling slowly through the nose
- Repeat the process
- As you progress increase holding your breath up to 10 seconds

Lesson Two: Stance and Center of Gravity

There are three components of a stance. It must be comfortable so one can assume the posture without undue fatigue. It must be stable so proper traction is achieved for a fast and powerful technique. Finally, it must be flexible so mobility is never hampered.

Understanding of body mechanics and knowing what muscles are involved and how and when they play into action must all be considered. Placement and maneuvering of the center of gravity completes the equation. There are two main stances – the natural knees straight stance and the knees bent one foot in-front fighting stance.



Natural Stance



Right Fighting Stance



Left Fighting Stance

Characteristics of all stances:

- Center of gravity falls within the stance
- Feet are spread hip width

Characteristics of fighting stances:

- Both knees bent slightly and tensed outwards
- Weight evenly distributed on both feet
- Feet are spread hip width
- Toes of trailing foot is in line with heel of leading foot
- Leading foot points directly forward

- Trailing foot points about 15 degrees to the side

Exercise: From natural stance:

- Move right foot forward to assume right fighting stance
- Move left foot forward to assume left fighting stance
- Move left foot backward to assume right fighting stance
- Move right foot backward to assume left fighting stance
- Move left foot forward, turn 90 degrees to the right to assume left fighting stance
- Move right foot forward, turn 90 degrees to the left to assume right fighting stance
- Move right foot to the right, turn 90 degrees to the right to assume right fighting stance
- Move left foot to the left, turn 90 degrees to the left to assume left fighting stance

Volume6 No.1

Grip and Strikes

There are about 90 dialects in the Philippines, give or take a few. It is safe to assume that there are as many styles or schools of thought of the same fighting art with different vernacular titles. These arts were given a collective, generic name by the Spaniards. They were simply called Armas de Mano, later Filipinized to Arnis de Mano.

Before the development of Arnis de Mano, when real broadswords were used, the knife was held tightly on the handle. The butt of the handle extended about a couple of inches to secure the blade to the handle. The butt was not intended for any tactical purpose. In present day Arnis de Mano, the stick is held about a couple of inches from the end of the stick, first as a carryover of the old practice and second to be used for disarming techniques, an innovation of the 20th century.

Several elderly masters of Arnis de Mano, however have a disdain for disarming techniques, claiming that if your stick can be disarmed you are not good enough to be called an arnisador. The ancient disarming technique was to cut off the arm or to hit the hand so the opponent will automatically drop his weapon.

Whether you hold the stick at the very end or two inches from the end, the stick must be held tightly and securely with the thumb over the forefinger.

In Arnis de Mano, there are two types of blow, the strike (*hablig*) and the thrust (*ulos*). In the English terminology these terms may be used interchangeably. In Filipino terminology, however, these terms convey two different actions. A strike (*hablig*) is normally delivered in an angular cutting, slashing or snapping motion (like a whiplash). A thrust (*ulos*) is normally delivered in a straight forward stabbing, piercing motion.

In this section we will only deal with the primary blow of Arnis de Mano, that is strike or *hablig*. Thrust or *ulos* will be dealt with in another appropriate section.

With the different named styles and countless techniques of Arnis de Mano, there are only two classifications of strikes. They are the *hablig na palabas* (outward strike) and the *hablig na papasok* (inward strike). To better understand this concept, one has to think in tennis terms. In tennis there are the forehand (inward strike) and the backhand (outward strike). In more technical terms, forehand strike is also called medial strike and the backhand strike is called lateral strike.

Like in tennis, the strikes are oriented from the perspective of the person delivering the strike which is determined by the grip on the stick in relation to the direction of the strike.

The body is hypothetically divided vertically in the middle. This hypothetical division is called the vertical midline or the center line of the body. Any strike directed towards the vertical midline is called *hablig na papasok* (inward strike, forehand strike or medial strike). Any strike directed away from the vertical midline is called *hablig na palabas* (outward strike, backhand strike or lateral strike). Strikes, whether offensive or defensive, fall under the category of forehand strike or backhand strike. In simple terms when you strike with your right hand in the direction of your left side it is a forehand strike. When you strike with your right hand in the direction of your right side it is a backhand strike. This is also true with the left hand. When you strike with your left hand in the direction of your right side it is a forehand strike. When you strike with your left hand in the direction of your left side it is a backhand strike.

No matter what maneuver one executes, whether it is the up and down vertical strikes, the side to side horizontal strikes or the circular or roundabout strikes, the strike is either a forehand or a backhand strike.

A forehand strike may be delivered with the leading hand or the trailing hand. Likewise, the backhand strike may be delivered with the leading hand or the trailing hand. Both strikes may be delivered from a regular stance (leading hand is the same side as the leading foot) or the reverse stance (leading hand is the opposite side of the leading foot).

In Amara Arkanis, all basic exercises are performed with two sticks. This is to instill in the student the need and importance of developing both the strong and the weak hand from the very onset of training. If only one stick is used, the student will favor one hand over the other and lose the fundamental nature of being able to fight with either hand, or just the “weaker” hand in case the “strong” hand is incapacitated. This is a condition that is called a “one-sided fighter” which may be a fatal flaw.

The most important factors in any strike, whether forehand or backhand, are form and technique. There was a time when a Filipino warrior depends solely on sheer brute strength. They did not have any style or form.

With the evolution of the art, body mechanics, leverage and utilization of the center of gravity have elevated the strikes to a higher and more powerful level. Proper style or form eliminates “wasted movements” increasing speed and energy.

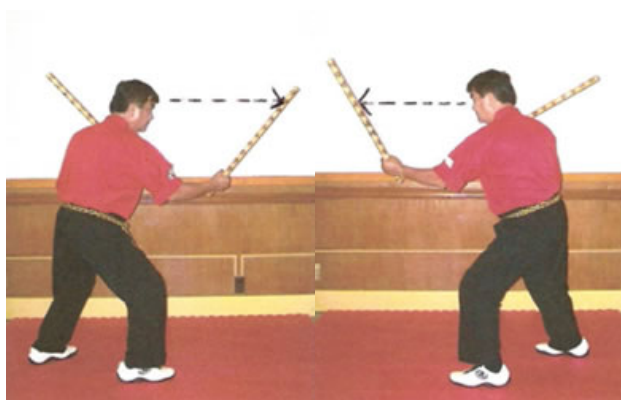
There are three levels of target of both forehand and backhand strikes; they are: upper, middle and lower. In the upper level, the most common strike is a strike to the head, the neck, or the shoulder in a downward motion. A deceptive strike in this level is a strike to the head or the neck in an upward motion. In the middle level, the most common is strike to the arms, sides or the hipbone in a sideward cutting motion. In the lower level, the most common is a strike to the knee in a downward motion. A deceptive strike in this level is an upward strike to the groin.



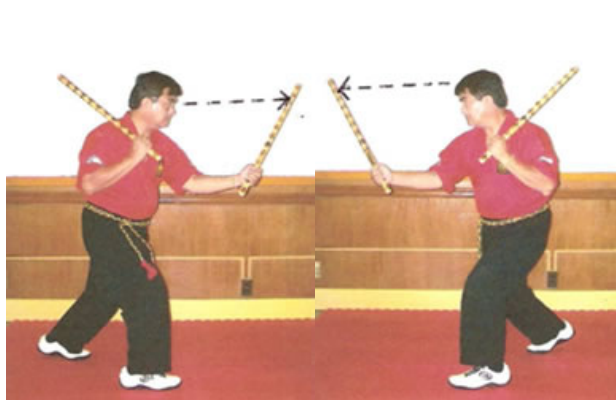
Forehand strike directed towards vertical centerline from regular stance.
Right foot forward - Left foot forward



Forehand strike directed towards vertical centerline from reverse stance.
Right foot forward - Left foot forward



Backhand strike directed outwards the vertical centerline from regular stance.
Right foot forward - Left foot forward



Backhand strike directed outwards the vertical centerline from reverse stance.
Right foot forward - Left foot forward

Manners of Striking

There are three manners in delivering a strike: with the flick of the wrist (like European foil fencing); the elbow bend (like tennis); and with the twist of the hips with follow through (like a slugger hitting a baseball). These motions should not be confused with range of fighting (short, medium and long range). All Amara Arkanis strikes utilize these three movements in every strike in conjunction with the stance, breathing and body tension.

Exercises and Drills:

- From natural stance move left foot forward to the left oblique to assume left fighting stance then deliver a forehand strike with the leading (left) hand
- Follow with a forehand strike with the reverse (right) hand
- Move left foot back to natural stance
- From natural stance move right foot forward to the right oblique to assume right fighting stance then deliver a forehand strike with the leading (right) hand
- Follow with a forehand strike with the reverse (left) hand
- Move right foot back to natural stance

- From natural stance move right foot to the right and pivot on left foot to face 90 degrees to the left to assume left fighting stance then deliver a forehand strike with the leading (left) hand
- Follow with a forehand strike with the reverse (right) hand
- Move right foot back to natural stance, pivoting on left foot to face 90 degrees to the right (original position)
- From natural stance move left foot to the left and pivot on right foot to face 90 degrees to the right to assume right fighting stance then deliver a forehand strike with the leading (right) hand
- Follow with a forehand strike with the reverse (left) hand
- Move left foot to natural stance pivoting on right foot to face 90 degrees to the left (original position)
- From natural stance move right foot back to the right oblique to assume left fighting stance then deliver a forehand strike with the leading (left) hand
- Follow with a forehand strike with the reverse (right) hand
- Move right foot forward to assume natural stance
- From natural stance move left foot back to the left oblique to assume right fighting stance then deliver forehand strike with the leading (right) hand
- Follow with a forehand strike with the reverse (left) hand
- Move left foot forward to assume natural stance

NOTE: First set of exercises will be upper strikes
 Second set of exercises will be middle strikes
 Third set of exercises will be lower strikes

Progression of Training:

- Move the foot to assume the stance, then deliver the first strike bringing center of gravity down and exhaling through the mouth then go back to original position.
- Move the foot to assume the stance as you deliver the first strike bringing center of gravity down, hold your breath, then deliver the second strike exhaling through the mouth then go back to original position.
- Move the foot to assume the stance as you deliver the strikes in quick succession at the same time bringing center of gravity down and exhaling through the mouth then go back to original position.

Move the foot to assume the stance as you deliver the strikes in quick succession with bun-yaw at the same time bringing the center of gravity down. The moving to the stance, the strikes, bringing down the center of gravity and exhalation (bun-yaw) must all end at the same time. Then go back to original position.

Volume6 No.2

Basic Thrust (ULOS)

In Filipino Fighting Arts, a thrust (*ulos*) is different from a strike (*hablig*). While *hablig* is an angular, cutting, slicing, slashing or hacking maneuver, *ulos* is basically a forward stabbing, piercing, penetrating tactic. *Ulos* (sometimes also known as *saksak* or *tusok*) is delivered using the tip of the knife, the end of the stick or the butt of the stick. When a knife is used alone, it is sometimes also used for slashing. But whether the knife is used for thrusting (stabbing) or slashing, the main pattern of motion is the multiplication sign or the **X** pattern.

Originally used exclusively in close range knife fighting, the *ulos* became part of *Arnis de Mano's espada y daga* (sword and dagger) system. In *doble baston* (double sticks) system, the tip and the butt are used as a knife.

There are two directions of *ulos*, overhand (*pabulusok*) and underhand (*paahon*). Overhand is executed normally in a downward motion with the hand raised above the elbow or the arm raised over the shoulder like a baseball pitcher throwing a fast ball. Underhand is executed normally in an upward motion with the hand below the level of the elbow or the arm below the level of the shoulder as a softball pitch.

Any part of the body that is hit with a knife, the end or the butt of the stick will cause injury, however, since the Filipino fighting art's principle is one-strike-one-kill, there are specific targets to achieve this goal.

The two main targets of an overhand knife thrust are the carotid arteries on the sides of the neck. Cutting or severing the carotid artery causes severe bleeding, depleting blood to the brain and other parts of the body that will have fatal result.

The two main targets of an underhand knife thrust are the heart and the liver. Injury to the heart disrupts the efficient pumping action of the organ. When the heart is damaged, blood supply is disrupted which normally have a fatal result. Damage to the liver may cause both external and internal bleeding which likewise may be fatal.

Injury caused by the end or the butt of the stick may not cause bleeding but may cause severe trauma that is just as deadly and fatal as an injury caused by a knife.

The underhand thrust to the heart was the thrust of choice when live blades were used. With the advent of the use of sticks, several variations were adopted. Thrust to the eyes, and thrusts to the other parts of the body were added to the repertoire of stick-fighting blows.

A thrust, particularly the underhand thrust is a very deceptive maneuver. In tournaments, the thrust is rarely used or allowed despite its effectiveness and speed of delivery. In defensive situations, the thrust stands out as a decisive blow that is quick to employ and not easy to block or defend against. The downside of the thrust is it is practical for close in and middle range of fighting but impractical for long range fighting unless using a sword or a long stick.



Underhand thrust with stick to the heart and the eye.



Double underhand thrust to the heart.



Combination overhand and underhand thrust to the heart.

The basic pattern of motion of the thrust is the multiplication sign or the X pattern.

Thrust to Right Carotid



Thrust to Left Carotid



Thrust to Heart



Thrust to Liver

Study all the Techniques and Retain those that will Best Work for you.

Volume6 No.3

Note: *Starting this issue, I will present non-technical aspects of Amara Arkanis which is rarely learned in the training hall environment.*

Teacher or Instructor?

In the English language, the terms teacher or instructor are used interchangeably and are synonymous with each other. In Filipino, these terms are both translated as Guro.

However, in Filipino, the term teacher is normally used in an educational institution, and carries a deeper meaning. A teacher builds character and attitude. A teacher invokes virtues that make a good individual great.

In martial arts, the term usually used is instructor. An instructor drills students in techniques and maneuvers. An instructor's goal is to make a better practitioner of a particular system or art.

In Amara Arkanis, the term used is teacher. An Amara Arkanis Teacher, teaches an individual not only to be a good fighter, but more important to be a better person; a fighter, who not only can execute the techniques skillfully, but also understand how the technique can be skillfully executed; a fighter who can execute a maneuver with minimum effort but with maximum result. A teacher must be a technician of skill and a designer of growth and development.

A teacher must cultivate the student's mind, not only to be excellent in the performance of the techniques, but also to be an exceptional strategist. The teacher must always impart to the student the desire to always strive for perfection by diligent and constant training and endeavor to build a solid foundation, both mentally and physically. A teacher must instill in the student the importance of accurate performance rather than just a demonstration of power. A Teacher must teach individuality of behavior.

Learning is much easier than teaching the fighting arts. To be a teacher one must have learned the art in a level that must be greater than ordinary. Having learned the art, one must be able to put the techniques into practice and believe in what he teaches. Finally, one must be able to realize and work on an individual's characteristics and learning habits.

A teacher must understand and master the principles and the techniques himself and then be able to impart this knowledge and mastery to the student. The teacher must always remember that teaching is also a process of learning.

Patience is a virtue that all teachers must possess and practice. Not all students have the same learning ability. There are students that are fast learners and naturally gifted. There are students that are slow and awkward. A teacher must always base the techniques on correct principles, no matter how uncoordinated the student may be. The teacher must adapt the art to the physical limitation of the student. The teacher who follows this attitude will himself make great progress in the techniques he is teaching. A teacher must constantly strive for correct progress.

A teacher must not try to stand out as compared to his students by showing off his strength or skill. Strength and skill are different from being a good teacher. It is very desirable to be technically skillful and be a good teacher at the same time, but sometimes a teacher may not be skillful at the techniques himself but can successfully teach others to be skillful. Sometimes a practitioner may be very skillful, but cannot successfully teach others, hence is not qualified to be a teacher.

A good teacher must not teach students to imitate the techniques alone, but must make the student understand the techniques with each bodily movement which conforms to the correct principles. By striving and devising a system to teach a slow learner, the teacher develops discipline and leadership in the basic principles and finer points of his art.

A good teacher must have the genius to bring out the students' talents and abilities. He does not need to either justify or promote his actions. He must be respected and not feared by his students.

A good teacher must always motivate his students to strive for superior performance and be able to unleash all of the student's physiological reserves of energy at the right instance.

A student's spirit is a mirror image of the teacher. If the teacher has a humble spirit, the student likewise will have a humble spirit. If the teacher is conceited, the student will also be conceited. A mediocre teacher produces a mediocre student, a good teacher produces good students and an excellent teacher produces an excellent student. Conversely, an excellent student brings out the excellence in a teacher.



Amara Arkanis International, Philippines' Mantas
L-R: Guro Isaac "Sac" Vida, Punong-Guro Felipe "Ipe" Penales, Guro Melvert "Irwin" Austria, Mataw-Guro Louelle Lledo, Punong-Guro Enrica "Nickie" Esmero, Punong-Guro Julio "Jojo" Penales and Guro Tristan "TJ" Mendoza.

Amara Arkanis Teachers are committed, not only in teaching the techniques, but also in enlightening the mind and nurturing the spirit.

Volume6 No.4

MINDSET

The dictionary defines mindset as attitude. It is also defined as state or frame of mind. There are those who call it determination or motivation. Others use more colorful terms as "never-say-die," even "do-or-die" and other descriptive terms. For our purpose, we will simply call it mindset.

More than good technique, more than proper conditioning, mindset is the most important factor in any encounter. A fighter less skilled and less conditioned but possessing the proper mindset can beat an opponent who does not have the appropriate mindset.

There are individuals born with a positive mindset and are ready and willing to face any type of confrontation head on. These people have self-confidence, self-reliance and the determination to be steadfast.

Unfortunately there are those born with a negative mindset and hide their weakness behind the cloak of pacifism. They mistake timidity and fear for peace and even godliness. They mistake docile submission as cooperative endeavor, not realizing or perhaps refusing to admit that it means crushed spirits and unhealthy attitudes.

Opposition to the use of force under any circumstances may be a noble ideal. However, in the real world where “dog eats dog,” it may be an empty talk that may cost an individual his life or the life of a loved one.

Skill in Amara Arkanis or any fighting art in itself may not alter an individual’s mindset because mindset comes from within the individual. However, Amara Arkanis will build self-confidence. This self-confidence will help the individual turn fear into an unwavering and resolute spirit, the main ingredients of a positive mindset.

Self-confidence and self-reliance create a positive mindset. With this frame of mind, an individual is ready and willing to stand straight and face the world head up high against adversity. Positive mindset in itself is a firm strategy.

A positive mindset must not be confused with haphazard aggressive action. A positive mindset is the product of proper training. A well-trained mind cannot be overwhelmed by fear or defeat. A well-trained mind will enable an individual to execute techniques and maneuvers without consciously thinking about it. In this state of mind, an individual will have no doubt or hesitation. With a positive mindset, the inner self (mind) and the outer self (body) work together in harmony.

It is sometimes possible to diffuse hostile intent when you project an aura of self-confidence. Sometimes though you may have to take a more positive and proactive step when an antagonistic attitude portends an impending confrontation.

In this type of situation, you must always take advantage of your opponent’s initial move. Aside from the motivation of avoiding being struck, you must have the willingness to strike back, strike hard and effectively and completely neutralize the threat. Some even claim that the “taste of blood” only makes them bolder and stronger. Proper training will give you the ability to gauge your opponent’s intentions. Proper training will enable you to form strategies against an opponent’s attack. When your opponent takes the initiative to strike first, proper training will enable you to avoid being struck by striking your opponent faster and harder. Do not allow your opponent to recover from your strike. Do not take it for granted that once you hit your opponent you must stop your attack. Do not dwell on your first strike or it will lose its effectiveness. Keep on striking never giving your opponent a chance to gain his composure. If your opponent is as skillful as you are, shift your strategy. Use broken timing never giving your opponent the opportunity to figure out your own rhythm. Always keep your opponent off-balance. Always strive to end the confrontation with one strike, if possible the first strike. After all the Filipino martial arts is based on the principle of one-strike-one-kill. All these put together is what positive mindset is all about.

Mindset makes the difference when the requirement is above and beyond the common experience.

“Limitations are only mental blocks and hurdles that can and must be overcome.”

Questions or Topics of interest for the Filipino martial arts contact:
Mataw Guro Luis Rafael C. Lledo, Jr. - **Email**



Mantas Phil Weathers at 7'3" dwarfs
Mataw Guro Louelle Lledo of
Amara Arkanis Sistemang
Praksiyon Martial Arts Education.

Jeff 'Stickman' Finder the writer of "Dinuguan For Brunch", Roberto Trinidad the administrator of "FMAF", and Luis Rafarl C. Lledo Jr. the writer for the "FMA Educational Depot," have written a column for this Special Issue that has not been in any issue of the FMA Digest.



Circles Within Circles

The path through life is rarely linear. Though time moves forward progressively, we often find ourselves revisiting situations or relationships, though the specific details may be new or different. Like links in a chain, the end is connected to the beginning in ways that sometimes lead us back there again.

Like many others I came to the Filipino martial arts through prior involvement in other fighting systems. While some martial arts seem insular and self-contained, I am often impressed with the breadth and depth of experience of so many experienced FMA'ers. Reading the profiles of those masters who are featured in the FMA Digest and elsewhere, one cannot help but notice how often they first held black belt ranks in one or more other styles before finding their way here.

For many of us the Filipino martial arts is like a graduate school, a doorway to advanced fighting skills where even so-called basics can reveal sophisticated attributes of sensitivity, timing and flow. Though it sometimes seems easier for true beginners to start with the Filipino martial arts, as opposed to the relearning which often challenges more experienced martial artists, once a taste is established, it's hard to turn back.

This past year marked a personal milestone for me, the twentieth anniversary of my realization that the Filipino martial arts, has become my primary art rather than a secondary one. With that 1989 epiphany, came the decision to focus my attention where my passion was leading me, and so I became a specialist of sorts. There are lots of different martial arts where I live, but back then there were still relatively few Filipino martial arts instructors or schools.

Today there are far more such resources available for those seriously interested in learning these arts. Still, much of the growth within Filipino martial arts has remained out of sight of the larger martial population. If asked, most will have a general idea that we use sticks; perhaps they even know some basic sinawali. They miss the larger picture, however, which isn't about a few sets of drills. It's about cultivating a flowing state of physical and mental awareness, regardless of whether or not weapons are used.

The Filipino martial arts integrate well with a broad range of other arts, from Muay Thai to Tai Chi Chuan to Aikido. I imagine those schools that undertake more intensive studies of the Filipino martial arts find it enhances other aspects of their

program. Understanding underlying principles is; a strength of the Filipino martial arts, and so is applicable towards other arts as well. Meanwhile, multi-style martial artists bring those experiences into the Filipino martial arts, an infusion of ideas and energy that keeps the arts vital and alive.

Lately I've somewhat unexpectedly been revisiting my pre-FMA roots. It's a homecoming of sorts, seeing the old through a new perspective. I hear with wry bemusement that well-worn Filipino martial arts phrase "We have that too!" as recognition melts the barriers once perceived between various arts. Is it really a surprise though? A look at our predecessors shows we are retracing well-worn footsteps.

Just as many Filipino martial arts Masters have studied different arts, there is a hidden influence of the Filipino martial arts on other martial styles as well, as a roll call of top practitioners reveals the presence of many Filipino names. Hollywood too has also had an impact as action stars such as Bruce Lee, Steven Seagal, Wesley Snipes, Matt Damon and others have incorporated Filipino martial arts sticks and blades into their on-screen repertoire. While the general public may not care, martial artists notice and seek out the sources behind the scenes, and so I find myself now mentoring former classmates and even teachers as we pull together these threads in the tapestry of martial arts.

Ultimately the role between teacher and student becomes blurred. One of my original instructors used to say there are no Masters, only those who are further along their learning path. While it is easier to see the transmission of knowledge from advanced practitioner to novice, it is the beginners' mind that is open to new ideas and influences, regardless of one's skill or rank. What is fixed becomes rigid, eventually unable to adapt or evolve. Perhaps the greatest gift one gets from teaching is to expect the unexpected, and that is practically the definition of flow, the ability to roll with whatever comes our way without getting stuck in patterns that do not serve our needs.



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Speak Up - Speak Out

Roberto Trinidad

The Future of the FMA Forum

I established the FMA Forum at a time when I had a lot of time on my hands. I was working for my father who was involved in several consultancy projects which didn't really demand a lot of my time. These days, I'm back in the corporate world and time is at a premium, which makes it difficult for me to find time to manage the boards on my own.

If I had the time, there are a few projects I'd like to work on, either as enhancements to the FMA Forum or as separate web sites. Some of these are ideas I've been playing around with. Others were suggested by FMA Forum members. These ideas are up for grabs, so if anyone out there wants to go and set up these web sites, feel free to do so.

FMA Video Magazine - I've thought about doing this in the past; interview some FMA masters, cover some events, show some demos and tutorial. But then, the idea of finding enough material for the video magazine which comes out on a regular basis seems a bit daunting. Still, if someone out there has the time and resources to pull this off, it could turn out to be quite a project.

FMA Video Tutorials Site - The concept is simple. Get some known FMA masters in front of a video camcorder to do a short tutorial on a signature technique of their FMA system. This will allow viewers to actually get an idea of how a particular FMA system works as well as training methodology. Another advantage is that we get a video record of how a particular FMA master teaches, and we get to keep it for posterity.

One doesn't need a website for this. All one has to do is set up a YouTube channel. Then again, unless you have your own site, you're basically giving up control of your content to YouTube.

FMA Directory Wiki - This was proposed by an FMA Forum member. The idea is to set up a wiki site to serve as a directory for various FMA groups, Masters, and instructors. This seems like a simple enough idea until you realize the possibility of "Edit Wars" which plague various wiki sites, especially Wikipedia.

FMA Symposiums / Seminars - Regulars of the FMA Picnic / Gatherings were actually considering setting these up. We'd get different masters and groups together to discuss specific topics concerning FMA. The biggest hurdles were getting enough people to participate as well as finding a suitable venue.

FMA Tours – It would be a nice idea to offer these to foreigners. It would provide many FMA Masters in the Philippines with a source of livelihood and it would improve the accessibility of FMA to foreigners. Of course, this would be more of a business venture unlike some of the others above, and like all business ventures, there's a question of whether there's enough demand to sustain the business.

I Can Dream, Can't I?

Alas, as much as I'd like to see any or all of the above become a reality, current responsibilities keep me from working on them. Maybe in the future, I'll be able to see at least one of these projects through. As I've said earlier, if anyone wants to pick up one of these ideas and run with it, he/she has my full support and that of the FMA Forum community.

See you there!



By Luis Rafael C. Lledo, Jr.
www.amara-arkanis.com

How Early Should Martial Arts Training Start?

There are two schools of thought on how early one should start physical training. One school advocates starting early because most successful athletes who achieve international success and fame or who possess the ability and skill for international competition have anywhere from 5 to 15 years of training and competing experience.

In most athletic events, athletic maturity is attained between the ages of 20 and 30. There are gifted ones who have extended their staying power to 40 years or even way past that age. Once in a while there are exceptional athletes who stay on top of their sport even at the “ripe old” age of 50 years.

The “earlier the better” school of thought insists that it is good to instill the competitive spirit in the child at an early age. But not every youngster has the inclination or discipline to achieve international fame. Those who are impressed, mostly by their parents, and by other athletes to be great and successful set a specific goal and work hard to perfect their style and technique. They work hard towards peak form and strive to improve and develop in every training session.



The young warriors of Amara Arkanis, Philippines.



Young members of Zikdokan Amara Arkanis display their certificate of Promotion.



Even as a youngster Mark Lledo had good form.

Then there are some who train just for their own satisfaction and enjoyment. Some medical professionals agree that imparting the interest to participate in physical

training at an early age is very good not only for the health of the body but also for the total well-being of the child.

The other school of thought does not encourage training at an early age and takes a more conservative albeit cautious approach. This school maintains that children below 10 years old still have underdeveloped motor nerve and muscle coordination. At this stage, the body is undergoing a lot of changes and adjustments. The body structure changes somewhat and a heavy and strict regimen of exercise is not advisable or practical. When the motor nerve is still in the developmental stage it is very easy to develop bad habits and “out of sync” techniques which may be very difficult to correct later on.

On account that not everybody is the same, the best gauge in how early martial arts training should start, must be the youngster’s reaction, enthusiasm, enjoyment and individual development. Stimulate the child to have fun and enjoy the training as a game. However, even at the early stages of a youngster’s training, correct procedure and good form must be emphasized at all times and must take precedence over speed and power.



Mataw-Guro Louelle Lledo believes that age is a lesser factor in learning the martial arts and the greater factor is the ability of the teacher to impart the skill in a manner that will be beneficial to the well-being of the child. To prove that he practices what he preaches, he is shown here with his grandson Dave Colin Lledo Velasquez, 4 years old.

The medical field may always be divided on this matter, but Amara Arkanis martial arts Education Program was designed with practitioners of all ages in mind. The program is basic enough for youngsters to understand and enjoy, yet progressive enough for advance students to enable them to attain superior performance.



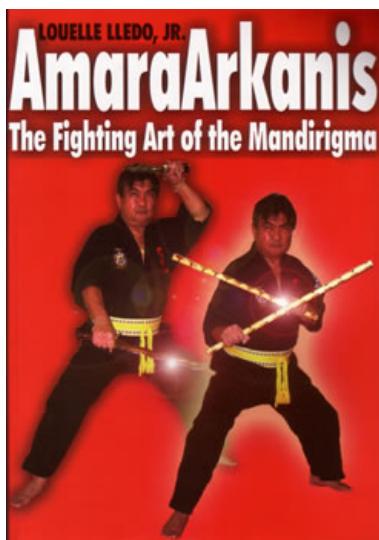
Amara Arkanis Martial Arts Education Program is not merely about the fighting arts, but more important, about obedience to authority, respect for the elders and developing the total well-being of the individual to be a responsible and productive citizen.



Under the auspices of Kiwanis International, youngsters of Indang, Cavite are trained in the martial arts by Amara Arkanis Guros shown on the front row with officials of Kiwanis.
Average age of this class is 10 years old.

“Start a child on the right path while he is young, and when he is old, he will not forget what he has been taught” ...Proverb 22:6

Questions or Topics of interest for the Filipino martial arts contact:
Mataw Guro Luis Rafael C. Lledo, Jr. - **Email**



Amara Arkanis

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By: MatawGuro Louelle Lledo Jr.

MatawGuro Louelle Lledo Jr. is the Founder of Amara Arkanis and writes the column FMA Educational Depot for the FMA Digest.

This book is designed for the **Beginner** in the Filipino martial arts, so they will have a concrete foundation, going through a step-by-step learning of the fundamentals. It is for the **Advanced Student** who may not have gone through this type of training, so they will understand the underlying principles of the maneuvers they execute. And for the **Prospective Teacher**, so they can better organize a more systematized lesson plan or

course of study for a more effective and efficient teaching and learning experience of the Filipino martial arts.

This is the same Filipino Martial Arts Education Program that MatawGuro Louelle Lledo used successfully at the State Colleges and Universities Athletic Association Region IV and his students who are teaching in the Philippines. This book is a necessity to those who wish to format their teaching at a higher educational level and give their students a deeper understanding of their training.. Over a 172 pages packed with pictures and examples.

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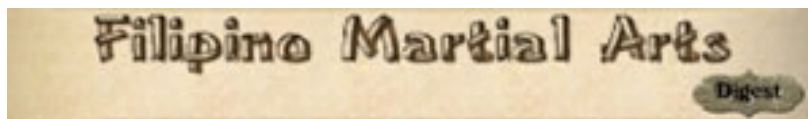
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