

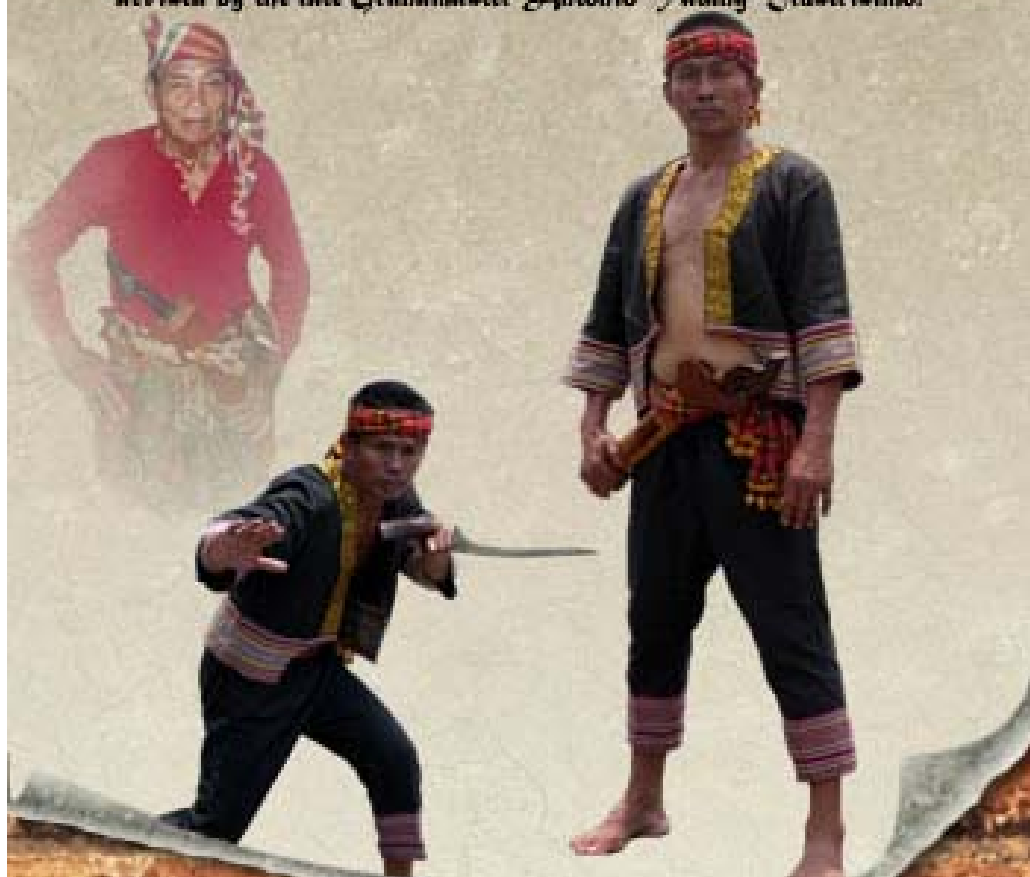
Filipino Martial Arts

Digest

Zu'bu Kali Ilustrisimo

Special Edition
2007

Zu'bu Kali Ilustrisimo is a devastating and highly effective form of Filipino Martial Arts. Retaining all of the core techniques, concepts and strategies devised by the late Grandmaster Antonio 'Tatang' Ilustrisimo.



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Contents

From the Publishers Desk

Introduction

Grandmaster Epifanio ‘Yuli’ Romo

Zu’Bu Kali Ilustrisimo WHQ

Zu’bu Kali Ilustrisimo Guro’s

A Lifelong Student and Friend

An Endless Journey

Dynamic and Evolving

Rewarding Experience

The Beginning Reflects the End

Mystical Master

Finally, an Art that Fitted My Persona

A System so Simple Yet so Complex

Definitely One of a Kind

A Journey of a Lifetime

A Journey Towards Growth and Achievement

A Continuous Journey

No Looking Back

Standing in the Shadow of a Giant

A Warrior Re-born

Experiences of Bahad Zu’Bu

My Experience of Bahad Zu’bu

Karunongang Lihim

Knife Demonstration

Zu’Bu Kali Ilustrisimo Contact Information

Testimonials

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

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

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From the Publishers Desk

Kumusta

It is with the help of Punong Guro Peter Lewis that the FMAdigest is able to bring you the reader information on Dakilang Guro Epifanio 'Yuli' Romo Jr. who has put together with expertise and professional skills BaHad Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo.

As you read comments from his students you will understand the high regard that Dakilang Guro Romo is held and it is not just by his students but all that have come into contact with him.

If you ever travel to the Philippines it is with the utmost urging that you make time to meet and given a chance train with this skilled Filipino martial artist. So enough said, read on and experience a remarkable practitioner.

Maraming Salamat Po



Introduction

Zu'bu Kali Ilustrisimo is a devastating and highly effective form of Filipino Martial Arts, retaining all of the core techniques, concepts and strategies devised by the late Grandmaster Antonio 'Tatang' Ilustrisimo. Additionally, the system incorporates the dynamic expression of movement unique to Grandmaster Epifanio 'Yuli' Romo.

A blade-based art, this system differs from other forms of Filipino Martial art in that there are no weapon-to-weapon blocking techniques. Instead, Grandmaster Romo incorporates direct, preemptive situational destructions, parrying methods and explosive disarming techniques. Training in Zu'bu Kali Ilustrisimo includes the use of:

- **Barong** - a leaf-shaped sword, and the favorite of Grandmaster Ilustrisimo.
- **Pinuti** - a narrow sword suitable for stabbing and slashing.
- **Kris** - a wavy-edged sword.
- **Tungkod** and **Sungkod** - four- and three-foot staffs.
- **Pisaw** – knife.
- **Solo Baston** - single stick.
- **Doble Baston** - double stick.
- **Panyo** – handkerchief.
- **Lubas Pangamut** - hardcore empty-handed fighting.

In order to establish International Brotherhood and Friendship, a new forum dedicated to Zu'bu Kali Ilustrisimo has been established to enable regular contact from around the world to be made between fellow students practicing and promoting this martial art. Additionally, Punong Guro Peter Lewis has established the www.zubu-kali.co.uk website for activities within the UK and Europe and the site of Grandmaster Yuli at www.yuli-romo.com has been totally redesigned to include all developments within the system.

Finally, many thanks to Grandmaster Yuli for his continued friendship and support, and to the International Family of Zu'bu Kali Ilustrisimo practitioners around the world, “maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat.” (Many thanks to you all).





Grandmaster Epifanio 'Yuli' Romo

Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo

By Peter Lewis

Without doubt one of the most colorful, dynamic and respected figures of the Filipino Martial Arts is Grandmaster Epifanio 'Yuli' Romo of Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo. Famous for his creative demonstrations of explosive disarming methods and the "Dance of the Juramentado" form using the Barong or Kampilan swords, Grandmaster Yuli is an extremely popular figure within FMA circles throughout the Philippines. Very much in demand for his potent, high-powered and unique no-nonsense approach to the FMA, Grandmaster Yuli has many international students from around the world.

While his status and history within the system of the late Grandmaster Antonio 'Tatang' Ilustrisimo is well documented, Grandmaster Yuli has a very impressive direct lineage to some of the most famous warriors that the FMA has ever known. This article sheds some light on the life and development of this low-key and extremely humble icon of Filipino Martial Arts, regarded by many to be a "National Treasure of the Philippines."

Born on April 23, 1949 in Pilar, Camotes Island in the province of Cebu, Philippines, Grandmaster Epifanio 'Yuli' Romo was introduced to the Filipino Martial Arts from a very early age. During the early 1900's, the FMA were extremely popular and the most famous families of warriors within the central Philippines were the Romos, Saavedras and the Ilustrisimos. It was during this golden era that Grandmaster Islao Romo, a highly revered teacher and fighter, defeated many famous masters from other systems. Grandmaster Yuli learned the revered blade-based system of his famous Great Uncle Islao Romo from his uncles Pedring Romo and Pael Aviles. Grandmaster Yuli is the current heir to this system.



Diwata-Falls

As a teenager, Grandmaster Yuli studied the art of the famous rebel hero of the Filipino-Spanish War of Independence, Soferino "Kapitan Perong Pak-an" Borinaga. Known as the Repigada-Pigada system, this family art was eventually passed to Grandmaster Kikoy Boringa, who taught the young Yuli Romo during the 1960's. Grandmaster Yuli is the only inheritor of the Repikada-Pigada system.

Moving to Manila during the early 1970's, Grandmaster Yuli trained in the Balintawak Eskrima system with Boy Ursal, a senior student of the respected Cebuano

teacher, Grandmaster Joe Go. Eventually, Grandmaster Yuli returned to Cebu to learn directly from Grandmaster Joe Go. As well as studying Balintawak Eskrima, Grandmaster Yuli also learned the empty-handed system of Tat Kun Tou and the long-staff system of Bio-Olisi, which is now known as Palakabanate, or simply Banate.

Grandmaster Yuli commenced training with Grandmaster Antonio ‘Tatang’ Ilustrisimo during 1976, approximately three months after the current head; Grandmaster Tony Diego had started training. As Grandmaster Yuli recalls, during the early days training with Tatang was both painful and fun. Constantly observing Tatang in action and taking notes whenever possible, Grandmaster Yuli noticed how Tatang reacted to the positioning and speed of the attacker, applying an infinite variety of counters according to the circumstances at that time. Grandmaster Yuli is acknowledged by his peers as the second most senior student of Tatang and is one of the original “Five Pillars” of this highly revered warrior art.

After a lifetime of development and evolution within the Filipino Martial Arts, Zu’Bu Kali Ilustrisimo was born on 23 April 2000. Incorporating and including all of the core concepts and fighting strategies of Grandmaster Ilustrisimo, Zu’Bu Kali Ilustrisimo is also influenced by the Romo Eskrima system and the Repigada-pigada system of Soferino Borinaga. Weapons categories within this well-rounded martial art include the use of the barong, kampilan and kris swords, four-foot and three-foot staffs, single and double cane, single and double knife, sword and knife and handkerchief. The empty-hand techniques are influenced by the techniques of Grandmaster Ilustrisimo and Grandmaster Joe Go and within the lubas pangamut, or hard-core empty-hand system, are included boxing, kicking, trapping, grappling, throwing, choking, strangling and off-balancing techniques.



While Grandmaster Yuli has taught many overseas students, it was not until 2003 that he gave the first ever authority to teach his dynamic martial art to Peter Lewis of the UK. Through the promotional efforts of Peter, many more overseas students have traveled to learn Zu’Bu Kali Ilustrisimo from Grandmaster Yuli Romo. The most dedicated of which include Nabil Azzouz from Algeria, Steve Villanueva and Michael DeBelle from the USA and Steven Sim from Singapore.

Grandmaster Yuli is constantly in demand for giving demonstrations during festivals and tournaments, as well as conducting seminars for local and international students. A regular guest instructor of the monthly gatherings in Manila, Grandmaster Yuli has also conducted seminars for visiting Russian students and was featured during October 2005 in a week long program of workshops organized by Master Rey Galang of Bakbakan International.

The growth of Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo continues on a worldwide level and on 1 March 2006, Grandmaster Yuli appointed Peter Lewis as “Punong Guro” (Head Instructor) to the WHQ of Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo. Peter humbly accepted this great honor and is now starting to promote the art more extensively within the UK. With interest already shown from Filipino Martial Arts instructors in Germany, Portugal, Poland, France and Spain, it is only a matter of time before Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo is recognized and practiced throughout Europe.

For information on training with Grandmaster Yuli Romo in the Philippines, visit www.yuli-romo.com or email gmyuli@bahadzubu.com



Punong Guro Peter Lewis
and
Grandmaster Yuli



Left - Right: Master Pedrito 'Pedring' Romo, Master Reynaldo 'Berong' Romo, Grandmaster Epifanio 'Yul' Romo, Master Roberto 'Boy' Romo, Master Romulo 'Muloy' Romo

Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo WHQ

Punong Guro Peter Lewis



Born 28th February 1960, Peter has spent a lifetime dedicated to the martial arts. His first experience of any martial art was in 1968, at a local youth center, when a police officer organized a series of introductory lessons to the art of Judo for children under the age of ten years. While Peter learned break-falls and three basic throws during the 6-week course, it was not until the age of thirteen that formal, regular training began at a local Judo club. Rapidly gaining a reputation as a strong fighter within the club, Peter had to compete with adults during his grade assessments at the ages of fourteen and fifteen. A broken clavicle at the age of sixteen saw a sudden change in career direction within the martial arts.

In 1976, Peter took up Wado Ryu Karate-Do. With intensive daily training, Peter competed in the first FEKO (Federation of English Karate Organizations) National Tournament and, as a yellow-belt at that time he totally outclassed all opposition below black-belt level. This tournament was a personal challenge for Peter, in that he wanted to assess his capabilities against fellow practitioners at a national level. The success in this tournament resulted in Peter seeking tuition from respected Japanese instructor Shizuo “Peter” Suzuki (6th Dan). During the early 1980s, the Suzuki Karate School in Birmingham, England, was highly respected as one of the most exclusive dojos in Wado Ryu Karate-Do outside of Japan. Peter remained here for several years, training on an almost daily basis. In 1985 the club was closed due to the ill health of Suzuki Sensei.

In 1987 Peter married his Filipino wife, Jenny, and this was the start of a growing desire to learn the Filipino Martial Arts. While already a senior-grade Black Belt in the Japanese Martial Arts, Peter felt that his knowledge and skills at that time did not fully equip him for street defense against weapon assault, bladed weapons in particular. While sharing his concerns and knowledge with numerous high-ranking martial artists, he became increasingly interested in the practical aspects of martial arts, teaching many front-line people including law-enforcement officers, armed forces personnel, nurses, disabled groups and victims of rape or abuse.

Constantly seeking a system that specialized in defense against weapons, it was by chance that, in 1994, Peter read an article in the Fighting Arts International magazine about Grandmaster Abner Pasa, written by Guro Krishna Godhania. Peter contacted the author and began training in the system of Warrior's Eskrima, in March 1995. Totally dedicating himself to this art, Peter was awarded his Instructor grade in August 1995, and was subsequently the first ever person to teach Warrior's Eskrima in the county of Worcestershire, England. Peter rapidly



Mark V. Wiley
Punong Guro Peter Lewis
Guro Krishna Godhania

progressed to become the most senior student within this art in the UK, and also gained experience of other forms of Filipino Martial Art from visiting instructors, including Alfred Plath of Modern Arnis, Mark “Crafty Dog” Denny of the Dog Brothers system and Mark V. Wiley of Kali Ilustrisimo. Of all of these additional arts, Peter was most intrigued by the concepts and strategies of the Kali Ilustrisimo system. In particular, the blade-based functionality, use of feinting methods and pre-emptive striking had great appeal to Peter.

In 2003, prior to a trip to the Philippines to visit family members, Peter asked his sister-in-law to try to locate Arnis instructors within the Manila area. She quickly responded and Peter grabbed the great opportunity to train with Master Roberto Labaniego of Lightning Scientific Arnis, and to receive intensive one-to-one tuition from Grandmaster Epifanio “Yuli” Romo of Kali Ilustrisimo. Within the Kali Ilustrisimo system Peter found the antithesis of all previous training in martial arts. Omitting weapon-to-weapon blocks in favor of pre-emptive situational destructions, pure fluidity and economy of motion, Kali Ilustrisimo offered solutions to the questions Peter had been trying to answer for two decades. With the invaluable benefit of cultural understanding and knowledge of the language gained through marriage, Peter immediately found himself at home training with Grandmaster Yuli and his senior students. Training with Grandmaster Yuli was the highlight of Peter’s lengthy martial arts career, and while the live weapon sparring was sometimes painful, the sense of humor, warmth and humility of Grandmaster Yuli made the whole experience unforgettable.

In January 2004, Peter became the first non-Filipino ever authorized by Grandmaster Yuli to teach his system of Filipino Martial Arts. This massive honor is something that Peter has fully embraced and he works tirelessly to promote Grandmaster Yuli Romo and his dynamic system of Zu’Bu Kali Ilustrisimo. Having established two websites for Grandmaster Yuli and Zu’Bu KI, Peter found himself becoming the international focal point for students wanting to make contact with Grandmaster Yuli for training in the Philippines. Additionally, Peter has written several articles on



Punong Guro Peter Lewis
Master Rey Galang
Nabil Azzouz

Grandmaster Yuli and his art for the UK-based Fighter’s, Combat and Martial Arts Illustrated magazines.

The genuine trust and friendship shared between Peter and Grandmaster Yuli led to Peter’s introduction to the Bakbakan International organization, via Master Reynaldo S. Galang. Peter greatly admired the professionalism and the feeling of brotherhood within the Bakbakan organization, as well as Master Rey’s vast knowledge of the Filipino martial arts and martial arts in general. During June 2005 Peter hosted a very successful seminar with Master Rey, bringing about the introduction of Bakbakan to the UK. As Bakbakan Kali Ilustrisimo continues to grow in the UK, Master Rey returns regularly to share his knowledge and test the practitioners of the arts. Master Rey’s openness and willingness to promote all forms of Filipino martial arts, rising above intrigue and politics, is admirable.

His scholarly works provide a platform for promoting the Filipino martial arts for their true value as highly efficient and effective warrior arts. Peter is now the senior UK representative of Master Rey Galang and the Bakbakan International organization.

In March 2006, Grandmaster Yuli Romo appointed Peter as Punong Guro to the World Headquarters of Zu'bu Kali Ilustrisimo. Peter has fully embraced this role with great determination and enthusiasm. A revamped website, dedicated forum and increased international interest are support his focus to spread this martial art globally. It appears that Grandmaster Yuli Romo will finally gain the international recognition that he truly deserves.

Peter would like to express his deepest gratitude to all influences on his expression of the martial arts, in particular Grandmaster Yuli Romo and Master Rey Galang for their unselfish and continued support and guidance. Additionally, Peter would like to thank Master Christopher "Topher" Ricketts, Guro John Jacobo, and Wileen Arellano of Bakbakan International for their friendship and support. Finally, a special thank you to all members of the family of Zu'bu Kali Ilustrisimo, especially to John Chan, Jeff Valdehueza, Jon Lota, Nabil Azzouz, David Hand, Phil Dandridge, Bob Melia, Steve Villanueva, Michael LaBelle and Steven Sim.



Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat.

For details of International activities or training with Punong Guro Peter Lewis, Visit: www.zubu-kali.co.uk or Email: peter@bahadzubu.com

Zu'bu Kali Ilustrisimo Guro's



L - R: Jun Meneses, Lando Lo, Loren Lo, Romy Cruz, Herald Labrado, Jeffrey Valdehueva, John Philip Chan, Mario Lacay, Robbie Trinidad, and Jahnen Romo.



Guro Blade Group

L - R: Guro Jun Meneses, Guro Rick Caminade, Guro Herald Labrado, Guro Nick Canuday, Guro Romeo Cruz, Jr., and Guro Loren Lo.

A Lifelong Student and Friend

By Guro Nick Canuday



I started learning the Filipino Martial Arts during the early 1970's and have known Grandmaster Yuli Romo since that time. I have been with him a long time witnessed his development and evolution, including the inception of Bahad ZuBu. I'm a seafarer by profession and whenever onshore (Philippines) I made sure that I'm updated on Grandmaster Yuli's dynamic art. I'm now retired and train with the Philippine BZKI group.

I still vividly remember, he would entice me to practice with him whenever he learns anything new from the countless martial arts and systems especially during years with the late Antonio 'Tatang' Ilustrisimo. His enthusiasm is boundless.

Like many of us, he started the art with the modernist approach and did very well in it. And, in the past years, as he reached what he refers to as the "state of mind", his approach is now interactive-traditional. The way ancient great warriors and masters handed down their wisdom in the fighting arts.

Grandmaster Yuli has always been in the search for anything better - technique, system and concept. He made it a point that he learns extensively and an admirable mastery of every martial art that has come his way.

It's not surprising that he has reached the highest state in the Filipino Martial Arts as a practitioner and as a teacher with all the hard work and boundless passion for the Filipino Martial Arts, history, culture and philosophy. I feel fortunate for witnessing his journey in the warrior path in the past three decades.



I hold our friendship and Bahad Zu'Bu in highest value/regard.

An Endless Journey

Guro John Philip Chan

Although I have a varied background in the martial arts, it was only when I saw the style of Grandmaster Yuli Romo that I became interested in the Filipino martial arts. I started training with Grandmaster Yuli during September 2000 and now feel that, if I could only turn back time, I would not have wasted my time training in the other martial arts. The reason for this statement is that I saw and learnt from Grandmaster Yuli what I consider to be the “real” martial arts. He is the only one I have seen with such unique speed, flexibility and knowledge in teaching and fighting.



Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo is an endless

journey and encompasses a wide and diverse range of combat methods. It is a very complete martial art and is constantly evolving and developing. Of all of the techniques studied, my favorite is the trangkada heneral, performed at random reaction and beating at doble karera.

My wish is for ZUBU to spread to be known throughout the world. To all you brothers in ZUBU, keep on practicing and promoting this great art of Grandmaster Yuli Romo. God bless us all.



Grandmaster Romo and Guro Chan
at Diwata Falls



Dynamic and Evolving

Guro Jun Meneses

My name is Jun Meneses and I am a lawyer and professor residing in Metro Manila, Philippines.

I have long been interested in the Filipino Martial Arts, having started studying arnis in primary school as part of the Physical Education course. I started training with Grandmaster Yuli Romo during 2004. Studying the art under this respected Grandmaster is like playing a game of chess with sticks and knives. The art is dynamic and evolving and, therefore, it becomes a mind game of constant adaptation. I enjoy all aspects of the art, but am especially interested in the bladed applications.



Guro Jun Meneses and Guro Lorenzo Lo

Rewarding Experience

Guro Lorenzo Lo



I started training with Grandmaster Yuli Romo during November 2004 and have regularly maintained training with him ever since that time.

Training under Grandmaster Yuli Romo has been a rewarding experience. With each session, one learns not only the techniques, but also their underlying principles/concepts. Likewise, drills are practiced to develop attributes such as timing, coordination, body mechanics, footwork etc, thereby, revealing their true intent and purpose. Sometimes, frustration does arise when one could not comprehend what Maestro Yuli is trying to show... However, everything becomes crystal clear once he reveals the multitude of applications one seemingly insignificant

movement can become. He truly is a Master of his art...



Guro Lorenzo Lo and Guro Jun Meneses

The Beginning Reflects the End

bAHAd

Guro Avel Giron Arcilla



A natural interest of the Martial Arts - a propensity to turn a bookstore upside down for martial arts books. I started formal training when I was 16 years old with a little FMA and JMA. Also, I have interest in CMA and Thai MA.

Early this year (January 29th 2006), I decided to come back to my first love, Filipino Martial Arts. I got in touch with Grandmaster Yuli Romo thankfully through PG Peter Lewis and the rest is history. After long years of looking and waiting, finally, I'm now in Bahad Zu'Bu.

Credit is always given where it's due. Grandmaster would attribute a handed-down technique and concept respectively from Tatang (Grandmaster

Antonio Ilustrisimo), Perung (Perung Borinaga - Repikada Pigada), Jose Milan Go (Balintawak/Tat Kun To) or Islao Romo (Romo Family System).

Grandmaster Yuli has an outstanding teaching and peripheral awareness. It's not unusual for us to be promptly corrected, educated and enlightened. You'd usually hear him, "Stop. Hold your position. Don't move!" even if he's engaged from a distance with other students or visitors.

Creativity and dynamism is encouraged as he always stress to "respect your mind!" and "everything is situational!"

When Grandmaster is prompted with a subject whether it involves a specific technique, a system or a concept, he dissects and discusses from almost every perspective - human kinetics, physics, ergonomics, combat realism and principles, physiology, anatomy, history, philosophy, culture and "cross-sectional parallelism".

It never fails to amaze me up to know how ingeniously Grandmaster Yuli has merged the fighting arts and concept of Antonio 'Tatang' Ilustrisimo (Kali Ilustrisimo),

Solferino 'Perung' Borinaga (Repikada Pigada), Jose Milan Go (Tat Kun To/Balintawak/Dugukan) and Islao Romo, blended them and added his own personal fighting concept, giving way to this very combative, brilliant, realistic and highly-dynamic fighting concept and art of bAHAd Zu'Bu.

Please, not on how "bAHAd" has been written, the beginning reflects the end. As explained by Grandmaster, "You end where you have begun. No technique is advanced. Everything is simple basic. Whether you're aware of it or not I give everything to you on the first day. So that if I die today or tomorrow. There is nothing lacking in you." True enough, when days, weeks, months and years pass one is simultaneously enlightened and boggled - It has been there taught on that first training day! Just when you thought you've learned enough. Grandmaster Yuli would boggle your mind to the next level and infinite possibilities.

As a person Grandmaster Yuli Romo is a witty and funny historian, philosopher and a low key top Filipino martial arts Grandmaster rolled into one. A genius, with a natural gift in combat arts. As a guro, he breathes, walks and talks Filipino history, philosophy, culture and Filipino martial arts. Not only a great teacher, he's more of a father unselfishly pouring out his lifelong hard-earned wisdom and experience on all aspects of life most especially in Filipino martial arts. I've never met a person whose won my admiration like maestro Yuli.

His lineage - impeccable! His state of mind - unsurpassed!

His Filipino Martial Art combat art - a Dynamic World Class Top-Notch!

Mystical Master

Guro Jerome Sarinas



I am Jerome Romulo T. Sarinas, widely known as "Eome" by my friends and colleagues.

Like others, I have always been amazed with the martial arts. It seemed like magic to me, by the way they moved and executed the techniques. The way they meditated before and after sessions. I have always loved the sword. I even loved the light sabre duels and all the powers of the force when I was a kid back then.

Eventually I have come to learn karate, judo, JKD, Yaw Yan, Pasay chapter, and Hombu traditional Aikido. But due to some reasons, I have never finished any curriculum of the arts I have undertaken. My love for the sword has been awakened due to the ken suburis of Aikido.

Before all of these systems that I have taken, I had heard of a mystical master who was unique in his sword techniques. I've also read stories that were like movie scripts of a blockbuster movie. He was already gone by the time I heard of him, so this was the time I had the chance to know the story of a man who was a direct student of

Grandmaster Antonio Ilustrisimo. And this is no other than, Grandmaster Epifanio “Yuli” Romo. And the rest has been written in Gods book.

I have never been under a Grandmaster before, so the knowledge that he imparted to us was great and enormous. Sometimes there was pressure, but it molded us into better people... wise and fearless warriors. Grandmaster Yuli is highly skilled in forging a person physically, mentally and spiritually. You will seldom see this in a Grandmaster. He treats his students as his own family and this is what makes Grandmaster Yuli different from the rest.

All of these things wouldn't have taken place if it weren't for Punong Guro Peter Lewis. I see the heart of a master in him. And I see that in the coming years that he will elevate this system to a higher level. Salamat sa iyo kapatid na Peter Lewis. (Thank you Peter Lewis).

Before and after everything, I give thanks and praise to God almighty. To only Him belong praises and glory.



Finally, an Art that Fitted My Persona

Guro John Intong

My fascination with martial arts started at an early age mostly due to watching Jackie Chan flicks and the like that was when I was 5). I then asked my parents to look for a school for me, unfortunately though; they wouldn't enroll me because they said I had heavy hands.



When I was 12, I had the chance to join an informal TKD club, and grabbed the opportunity...but my parents found out and had me stop. The next chance I got was in college; way back 1997, when I joined the U.P. Beta Sigma Fraternity. Our brotherhood had a continuing martial arts program which was spearheaded in the 1960's by our Fraternity Brother; Grandmaster Johnny Chiuten. Over the years, I remained active in the School Of Martial Arts (or SOMA, as we call it), even though I left the University to pursue a different course. In 2000, I met Johnny in person, and he, and a handful of broods were thinking of reviving the real deal in SOMA. I joined the preparatory phase, which was Black Secret, a style, which was a mixture of Karate and Kung Fu.

Finally, in 2003, when Johnny launched his new style, Pronus-Supinus, I was among the first batch to be trained in his new system. One of the requisites of which, was to join Tetada Kalimasada, an Indonesian energy

martial/healing art. I finally got tired of waiting/cajoling other broods to practice...they would only practice when Johnny himself was there (which was far and few between). At that time, I had started training in Balintawak Arnis under Grandmaster Bob Silver Tabimina (I decided to forge my own path by then). Then someone offered to teach me the Ilustrisimo style, and after the first meeting, told me that Balintawak and Ilustrisimo will never blend, and that I'd have to choose some day. That got me a bit frustrated because I saw the functionality and beauty of both styles. One day, in December 2004, I was surfing the Internet and chanced on Grandmaster Yuli's website, and the picture of him caught my attention; here was one of the five pillars of Kali Ilustrisimo in a stance that was definitely Balintawak. Finally, an art that fitted my persona.

My first exposure to Filipino martial arts was in college P.E. (the usual sinawali/modern arnis) and let's just say that the impact on me wasn't as strong. Anyway, having been trained in Balintawak first, then shifting to Grandmaster Yuli's system had its pros and cons. I had (and still have) difficulty in doing the double weapon forms, Balintawak being primarily single olisi based. Despite that, Maestro always tells me never to forget my Balintawak training. And that was the plus side; I didn't have to re-learn the body mechanics because I already had the base for that. As much as I wanted to train as often as possible (every day if given the chance), I had to support myself so I trained every Saturday morning with Maestro Yuli. Usually, it was just the two of us; rarely did I get to see the other brothers in the art, with the exception of Guro John and Guro Herald. Training started at eight and ended around one in the afternoon. It wasn't all sweat and back breaking series, half of the time was spent talking, asking questions and analyzing the stuff we had done or were about to do. Now, that kind of training might be frowned upon by most martial arts practitioners, having been used to the rigorous stretching and forms practice, but as Grandmaster Yuli would always say; what good is anything you do if you know not what you are doing in the first place. Understanding. That is what is more important than aching muscles and bruises, and if you come to think of it, it makes more sense.

Many a times, when asked if he teaches self-defense, Maestro answers no. For what good is a blade against a gun, however good the blade-wielder is? What is it he teaches then you may ask?

Grandmaster Yuli's answer would be the history, culture and philosophy of the Filipino ancestral fighting arts. To learn, one has to understand, and to understand, one has to feel, to feel one must immerse oneself, and to immerse oneself, one must live it. It is that simple but also that complicated. We of the Bahad Zu'bu love to contradict ourselves, to imagine that we face ourselves in combat, for it is only then we see what we do right or wrong.

I was probably born with the affinity for bladed weapons. At age 8 I started a knife collection, mostly scouting knives and interesting looking steak knives. My mom always hid those knives and I always managed to find them. One day when I was fifteen, I got caught carrying a stiletto and my mom was furious, she then threw away my knife collection, and I haven't seen them since. Still, I couldn't resist the call of the



blade, that's probably why I studied to become a chef to be surrounded by blades.

Bahad Zu'bu KI is very blade oriented; I remember when we compared using sticks to wooden swords, we all agreed that movements like retirada, florete and trankada when done with blades, gave more meaning and emphasis to the twisting of the wrist. To the untrained eye, the slight reversing of the wrist/palm position would mean nothing, and probably be mistaken as weakness. There lies the essence of a bladed art the thrusts and the slashes in between those thrusts. There is a certain grace and flow in our movement, unlike the other styles that I've seen, who use pound for pound force during practice.

I was given a banner last April 23, 2006, and I far from deserve it, in my point of view. There are still a lot of things that I need to learn and understand. The hard part of it is that Bahad Zu'bu is ever changing and evolving, and I'd probably be old and wrinkled before I catch up. Hahaha! As new situations arise, so do new options, thus evolution takes place. It is like a tree shedding its leaves to make way for new ones. Bahad Zu'bu is what the art is known by today, but tomorrow, who knows? A name is a name, and a rose by any other name is just as sweet. What matters is the essence of the art, and that will never change.

A System so Simple Yet so Complex

Guro Ric Caminade



My name is Ric Caminade and I am an acupuncture practitioner from Tayuman, Manila. My exposure to Martial Arts in general and Filipino Martial arts in particular was first with my uncles who were all martial enthusiasts. Then I encountered it again back in high school (early 1980s) when Arnis and Karate was offered as an elective to our Physical Education.

Since then, martial arts became an important part of me. Although I could not train seriously due to economic considerations, I compensated by researching more on different martial art concepts and systems because I was looking for a system that's suitable to my temperament and personality.

My involvement in the martial arts began with an encounter with my Tai Chi teacher, Sifu Rene Navarro, back in the year 2000. Since then, I became deeply involved with my practice. However, my desire to learn Filipino Martial Arts never wavered. Before encountering Grandmaster Yuli, I explored other Filipino martial arts systems, which in my view are also good systems, but still I felt something's missing.

Then last January 2005; a friend informed me that Grandmaster Yuli Romo began teaching again and that I should try him. Seeing him in action and seeing how he uses his body with each



movement was enough to convince me that I found the system I am looking for.



Grandmaster Romo and Guro Caminade

I've never seen a system so simple yet so complex, so basic yet so advance. Often than not, after a day's practice, we usually go home, suffering not physical exhaustion but with information overload. He teaches us to look beyond techniques. Master the basic movements. Analyze the movements and understand the principles...because the most advanced techniques are basic. So in our practice, whether its single stick, double stick, knife, bare-hand, on lookers will see us repeating the same movements...again and again.

That's Grandmaster Yuli Romo.

Definitely One of a Kind

By Guro Roberto 'Robbie' Trinidad



My journey in the martial arts began during 1980 and has continued since that time. I currently enjoy teaching friends and also training with a Filipino martial arts special interest group at Accenture with Guro Mike Gubat. I work at Accenture as an IT Training Coordinator.

I only met Master Yuli November 2005 when I joined a Bakkakan sponsored seminar. While I only first met him there, I've already known about him for many years. I've seen his double stick work in a Kali Ilustrisimo instructional video and I've always been trying to track him down. Unfortunately, his place of practice was quite a ways off from where I lived.

During one of the days of the seminar, I brought over my kampilan to show the other participants who were asking about local blades. Master Yuli just happened to drop by and asked me if he could take a look at it. He then proceeded to wield it in a manner none of us, including Master Rey Galang, ever saw before. And yes, it's the same kampilan he used in the video that's posted in the Filipino martial arts Forum and over at "You Tube."

As luck would have it, I found out that he temporarily decided to hold practices at a nearby park, so I jumped at the chance to train with him. Needless to say training with him was a unique and enlightening experience. Also, since I owned a kampilan, he showed me some of the basic moves. "Befriend the blade," he told me, "and you will have nothing to fear from it."

It may be cliché, but Yuli Romo is definitely one of a kind. No matter what martial arts background one may have, Master Yuli never ceases to amaze. One can

always learn from him regardless of ones proficiency level in martial arts. Master Yuli has a profound understanding of martial arts. His system doesn't dwell on a catalogue of techniques but on the basic principles that define the ancestral fighting arts of the Philippines. As such, Master Yuli not only shares knowledge, but wisdom as well.

A Journey of a Lifetime

Guro David Hand

My journey in Martial arts began when I was 15; I started attending Hok Koon, White Crane Kung Fu, under Sifu John Fletcher. I also trained privately with him until a point when other adolescent things took over! After a gap of 10 or 11 years I started training again. It was during my re-training that I started to think there must be more than this to martial arts. We had hardly any contact during free sparring. So I began looking in magazines for other arts. I saw a small advert for Eskrima and phoned the instructor for all the information and attended the club the following week.

This club was being run by then Guro Peter Lewis, I really enjoyed the class and watched mesmerized as he and another student were executing a knife drill. It was so fast and full of contact, I was hooked. Since that time, I have trained with Guro Peter privately almost every week, attending classes too, and becoming close friends. At that time it was Warriors Eskrima, headed by Guro Krishna Godhanian. I had taken lots of gradings in Warriors up to 3rd Degree Instructor, and had opened a school in Kidderminster. Then in December 2003, Peter traveled to the Philippines to see his family and train with Grandmaster Yuli Romo. I looked after his club while he was away.

Upon his return in January 2004, Peter showed me some of the things that he had learnt; from that moment on I knew "Warriors" was history for me. The dynamic and explosive movements and responses that Bahad Zu'bu Kali Ilustrisimo had been instilled in Peter, I wanted to learn. I trained with Peter diligently, and found a new passion to train with. Zu'bu has so much to offer. Right from the start you are told what is the point of continuing your attack if your opponent is going to block it. Every opening you see, you should take advantage of, and if there isn't one, create one. If something is there to take i.e. a limb, destroy it. One of the other things that makes Zu'bu so unique is the explosiveness of the disarming techniques, Pete and I would be practicing together



and sometimes the canes would fly into the air 20 feet or more, often with pain to the one being disarmed, but hey, that's part of the territory with Filipino martial arts.

Yes all the tapping and slapping from the live hand hurts, but you get used to it after a while. Another great thing with Zu'Bu is the sparring, most of the time it is done with LIVE sticks, although shorter and thinner than most other styles I've encountered. They move so quickly and you still feel the rap on your fingers when it strikes, but this in turn teaches you to get your hands out the way and move faster.

Training in Zu'Bu has been a great enlightenment, and I'm very honored that Grandmaster Yuli Romo has allowed me to pass on what I've learnt from Peter (a huge Maraming Salamat Po to Grandmaster Yuli).

During the time I was training in Zubu, Peter was contacted by Master Reynaldo Galang of Bakbakan International, about hosting a seminar, and Peter being put on the Instructor program for the Bakbakan Kali Ilustrisimo system. The date was set and Master Rey came to England and stayed at my residence.

It was a really good time to find out more about the system and the Master behind it. Peter and I have trained with Master Rey in both seminar format and privately. This August (2006) we traveled to the WHQ of Bakbakan International, Lodi, New Jersey and that was an awesome experience. We met several of Master Rey's students, and did many hours of training. At the end of our trip Peter and I received "The Hataw" and are now Full Fledged Members, which is a great honor for us. (Many thanks to Master Rey for his hospitality, (many laugh's) and teaching, and thanks to my "New Brothers In Bakbakan").

I am about to open a new club, and have been told by Master Rey, and Grandmaster Yuli that I can teach what I have learnt, and I feel very privileged to do so. My future goals are to propagate the interest in Bakbakan Kali and Zu'Bu in the UK and further a field. Grandmaster Yuli deserves a lot more recognition for what he's trying to instill in people, and pass on the teachings of Grand Master Antonio "Tatang" Ilustrisimo, Grandmaster Islao Romo and other great forefathers of the Filipino martial arts.

A Journey Towards Growth and Achievement

By Guro Kevin Jones

My name is Kevin Jones and I am 38 years old. My journey in the martial arts started with the Chinese Martial Arts some 20 years ago. My study of these arts lasted, on and off, for 15 years.

Then one day I saw an advertisement for a Filipino Martial Arts club based locally. Since joining the club of Guro David Hand, I have never looked back. Guro Dave is the senior student of Punong Guro Peter Lewis who, at the time of my starting training in the Filipino martial arts, had introduced Warrior's Eskrima in the region a few years earlier and was the senior representative of Pangulong Guro Krishna Godhanian.

Things have moved on during the past five years, most especially since Punong Guro Peter trained in the Philippines with Grandmaster Yuli Romo. We now practice and promote the Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo system of Grandmaster Yuli Romo and the Bakbakan Kali Ilustrisimo system of Grandmaster Rey Galang. These Grandmasters are two of the original five pillars of the Kali Ilustrisimo system under the late Grandmaster Antonio 'Tatang' Ilustrisimo, so there are many similarities in the systems that we now propagate.

I have been very lucky to find such knowledgeable instructors who are only too willing to share what they know.



Grandmaster Rey Galang, Guro Jones,
and Punong Guro Peter Lewis

A Continuous Journey

By Guro Tony Goddard



I began my journey in martial arts some twenty years ago when I joined the local Kung Fu club at college. I'd always had an interest in the subject but now I had the opportunity to actually practice it.

I'd attained a reasonable standard in my Kung Fu training when I came across an advert in a martial arts magazine for one of the first Ninjutsu training courses to be held in the UK, I immediately signed up for it. The course was a real eye-opener and made me understand that my competition-based Kung Fu style was missing the street-defense realism I was really looking for.

In the years that followed I went on to study Ninjutsu and Ju-jitsu amongst other systems, all with the aim of improving my street-defense skills - competitions and gradings held little interest for me.

When I moved to live in Worcester in 2000 I was keen to continue my martial arts training, admittedly I was a little skeptical since I was new to the area and the thought of finding a good instructor seemed particularly remote - thankfully I was proved wrong. I discovered a martial arts club nearby practicing Eskrima, an art I'd heard of many times before but never thought I'd ever have the opportunity to practice. Punong Guro Peter Lewis welcomed me into his club and I've loved the art ever since.

I've now been studying as a personal student of Guro Peter for some six years and the training is always fun and mind-expanding: just when you think you've grasped one concept it opens the door to a million others.

I train in two styles of Kali with Guro Peter: Bahad Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo under Grandmaster Epifanio 'Yuli' Romo and Bakbakan Kali Ilustrisimo under Grandmaster Rey Galang. Last year I was awarded my instructor rating in Zu'Bu Kali and earlier this year I was honored by being invited to become an Affiliate member of Bakbakan International by Grandmaster Rey.

Having practiced other martial arts and styles of Eskrima / Kali I find that Kali Ilustrisimo is the one that really works for me. The moves are all efficient, street-wise and effective. The skills learned are easily transferable from stick to knife to empty-hand making it a very practical system to learn and to teach. The training is always fun and the humor is actively encouraged from the Grandmasters down. This isn't to say that the art isn't serious, quite the opposite, the techniques taught are absolutely devastating, but the humor I have found tends to keep egos at bay which is a common affliction in martial arts.

Whilst Kali Ilustrisimo offers a life-long study in its own right I've been pleased to discover that it can also be used as an effective supplement to other martial arts especially since so many people prefer to cross-train these days. It contains forms that can be enjoyed by students of kata; the weapons skills are of interest to students of purely striking or grappling arts; and in particular the practical knife-fighting skills are essential to any martial artist in my opinion.

Training under Guro Peter has always been a pleasure and I will forever be grateful for his continuing support and advice in running my club in Malvern.

For me, the values and ideals of Kali Ilustrisimo are encompassed by the Bakbakan salutation and provide a constant reminder of the goals to which, as practitioners, we should all aspire:

Karunungan (*Knowledge*)

Katapatan (*Loyalty*)

Katarungan (*Justice / Truth*)

No Looking Back

By Guro Phil Dandridge



I started off in the world of martial arts whilst still at school, studying the rudimentary of karate and judo. At 16 I met my first Master, Rex Jones of the Fei Lung Kwan. The Fei Lung Kwan teaches a Northern Shaolin system called Elephant Form Fist. I stayed with this system for almost 15 years. In the early 90's I also started to study the Hung Kuen system with Wei t'o Schools. On or about the same time I started to study Wing Chun Kung Fu under Scott Drew in Bath, who has remained a close friend of mine to this day.

It was Scott who first got me interested in the Filipino Marital Arts; this was through the introduction of JKD. Whilst working this with Scott I became more and more intrigued with the Filipino Martial Arts and sought to study it in more

depth. Shortly after this I started to train with John James of Rapid Arnis. I really enjoyed this system and the atmosphere was great in the class but by now my appetite was well and truly wet. As Rapid Arnis tended to be more sport orientated I wanted to find something, which was more traditional and combative so I sought out my present Master and friend Peter Lewis from Worcester in the Midlands. Master Lewis started teaching me the Warrior System of Eskrima and after some three years we switched to the Zu'bu Kali Ilustrisimo system of Grandmaster Yuli Romo. I have not looked back since. Master Lewis runs his society like a close-knit family, everyone knows everyone else and is interested in everyone else's development. Through this system and Master Lewis' training I look forward to going on to bigger and better things.



Training with Grandmaster Yuli Standing in the Shadow of a Giant

By Guro Steve Villanueva



Grandmaster Romo
and Guro Villanueva

I have been in the martial arts for several years. I was introduced to Filipino Martial Arts through the Inosanto Blend Kali here in Jacksonville, Florida where a small but lively band of aficionados train. I was born and raised in the Philippines but I was never exposed to Filipino martial arts until then.

I had been wandering in Filipino martial arts wilderness until I met Grandmaster Yuli Romo. Our first meeting was in the historic Luneta Park. He showed me where Tatang Ilustrisimo and his merry band of students played. Grandmaster Yuli had

trained in several systems including Tat Kun Tou and Balintawak. However, he was not satisfied. His search ended on the doorsteps of Tatang's humble home in Tondo. In Tatang Ilustrisimo, a feared escrimador, he would find his ultimate teacher. Through Tatang's "laboratory" in Luneta, Grandmaster Yuli was able to study and further hone his techniques. More than mere techniques, the whole concept of an



effective and efficient system was instilled.

I have been training with Grandmaster Yuli for the last 2 years. He has very willingly imparted his personal interpretation of Kali Ilustrisimo with a unique blend of Romo Clan and Borinaga styles, which he calls Bahad Zubu. On his directive, we will be establishing a Bahad Zubu outpost here in Florida.

It is an honor to train with Grandmaster Yuli Romo, a Filipino martial art giant.

A Warrior Re-born: Who is Punong Guro Michael D. Blackgrave?

By Manuel F. Nuñez

To put it simply, Michael D. Blackgrave is one of the top instructors of the Southeast Asian Archipelago's varied combative arts.

Michael Blackgrave was born on June 30, 1963 in the town of Huntingburg located in southern Indiana. He soon moved to Jasper, Indiana, where he was raised. He was first introduced to martial arts via military combat judo at the age of 12 from his father, Gus Thomas Blackgrave. This pushed him to pursue grappling in the high school wrestling team. He enjoyed it but states, "I would often get disqualified...too many rules there." It would be a few years before he would be introduced to Filipino methods, which he would find much more to his liking.

In 1983, with nothing to lose and with life going nowhere, he followed in the footsteps of his father and joined the United States Army. Although this was the beginning of his major exposure to the combat arts, it is also a period that Michael does not like to talk about much. Asked why, he responded as follows: *"I'm proud to have served my country. However, you have to do some things that are not easy to talk about. I served in some skirmishes. Believe me the 'Cold War' was anything but cold to many of us who served. Combat is what forges a warrior, but it also marks the soul. Besides...I was a bit of a rebel and clashed a lot with the officers. A lot of them didn't take too kindly to me."*



Guro Michael's first exposure to the Filipino Martial Arts came by way of a drunken brawl in 1984. *"It was Narcilito Pec. I thought I could take him; he was tiny compared to me. I'm 6'4" and back then I was about 220 pounds. He was about 5'4" and 130 pounds. Narcilito was the cook and I told him his food was horrible. I think I also insulted him. We were both very drunk. A fight ensued. I can't remember who hit whom first. What I did realize very quickly though was, hey this little guy can fight! I barely beat him by using a fire alarm bell on his head. Afterward, we ended up becoming good friends and he taught me some Kenpo and Arnis. He also happened to be Filipino, by the way. We trained as often as we could for a bit over a year. That gave me the bug."*

His training continued with a very in-depth study of Wing Tsun for close to three years, after which he picked up Goju - Ryu Karate under Kyoshi Balfour Wright. It was O'Sensei Peter Urban's system of Combat Goju - Ryu. Sparring was done in full - contact (not point - fighting) at seminars. It was with Goju - Ryu and some Wing Tsun as his base that Michael first encountered Pekiti - Tirsia Kali, the system of Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr. This was Michael's introduction to full - contact stickfighting and eventually, blade-fighting. "During that time I was stabbed while bouncing and realized that I had very little experience dealing with blades...and after doing research I had found that the Filipino combat arts are blade - oriented."

So began his foray into Southeast Asian combatives. Michael D. Blackgrave would eventually become Guro Michael D. Blackgrave, with almost ten years of solid training experience in Pekiti - Tirsia under him, practicing sometimes two to three hours a day. He also cross-trained in Kuntao and Silat under Guro Joel Morales, Malay Silat with various Pekiti-Tirsia instructors (who also had the Silat bug), and Silat Mubai under Master (Ustaz) Hussein Udom. Asked why he left Pekiti-Tirsia, he had this to say: *"A lot of people know of all the crazy politics that abound in the Filipino martial arts. I don't want any part of that. I'm fed up with rivalries...rumors and people just trying to stab each other in the back, so like a bad movie I got up and left."*

Guro Michael returned to continue his Wing Chun curriculum under a different teacher Sifu Scott Baker. *"I needed someone who was into the art but not the politics,"* he says. Sifu Baker's Wing Chun added a lot of dimension to his Silat. *"That's essentially what you have in the un-armed portion of the Filipino martial arts, particularly the systems influenced strongly by the Moros. It's Silat."*

As they say, however, you can take the boy out of the Kali and Silat, but you can't take the Kali and Silat out of the boy.

"I love these arts. They're immersed with the fruit of combative usage. In Pekiti - Tirsia I learned the deadliness of the Archipelago arts. We were trained to be killers; it's a military - dedicated system It wasn't until recently that I began to see the Filipino martial art in a far more spiritual light."

How did this happen?

After some time outside the Filipino arts, he approached one of the more quiet and humble but vastly skilled Filipino martial art players out there: Grandmaster Epifanio "Yuli" Romo Jr.

Guro Michael first began to correspond with Grandmaster Yuli Romo Jr. in 2005. On October 1, 2006 he talked with him by phone. Master Yuli was familiar with the politics that had driven Guro Michael out of the Pekiti - Tirsia circles and offered an alternative.

"He referred to me by the name that Master Hussein Udom of Silat Mubai gave me; 'Khalid,' and that he knew me and of my past troubles with all of the politics and trash - talking. Grandmaster Yuli said



to me. *'Your old ways are so involved with death and killing. But I am not about death and killing. I am about life. You must come and see me. I want to train you.'* ”

Last month, Guro Michael Blackgrave did just that. He spent most of a hot, humid month training 6-8 hours a day privately with Master Yuli Romo on Camotes Island, which formally adopted him as an honorary son.



“It was amazing. Master Yuli is amazing. He has such a deep knowledge of not only the tactics and concepts of the art but he is also a true master of the history and culture of his people; he reads and studies so much. He also has such a giving heart; he’s not moved by money or greed. And he shared little - known historical facts with me which have been so misunderstood that we have taken incorrect accounts as facts today.”

As a result of the intense training, along with his extensive experience in the Filipino martial art and Silat, Guro Michael Blackgrave was named Punong Guro of BaHad Zu’bu Kali Ilustrisimo, (Mangtaas era). He is the Director of the Western Headquarters (USA) for the aforementioned organization and looks forward to helping them spread but cautions: *“We do things the old way. Master Yuli’s art is very sacred and he doesn’t want it to go the way of so many popularized Filipino martial arts. I have to respect that.”*

And how does he feel with this new burden of responsibility? *“I love it,”* he says.

Experiences of Bahad Zu’Bu

By Guro Marlon Pabilona

"My name is Marlon Pabilona. I was born on March 7, 1976 and currently living at City of Edmonton, Alberta Canada. My formal training in Martial Arts started when I joined Seiwakai Aikido Philippines under 7th Dan Koichi Shibata Sensei, on April 1998. I received my Shodan or Blackbelt Degree 5 years after. On year 2000, I joined Kapatirang Doble Olisi Escrima - KDO under Master Mario Palazuelo, who lead me to the path to learn, experience and enjoy Arnis/Escrima and taught me Doble Olisi 24 Original from old double stick fighting style.

During my work transfer in Manila, I met Grandmaster Yuli Romo at Quezon City Circle with other Bahad Zu'bu Students. I was fascinated



Grandmaster Romo and Guro Pabilona

with the profound combative skill and Intellectual diversity of Grandmaster Yuli Romo in Filipino Martial Arts. The Systematic teaching method, tremendous techniques, proper foot works and Body Mechanics of Grandmaster Yuli's style are absolutely overwhelming in our training using single and double Stick, Wild stick and bladed weapons such as Kampilan, Barong, P'saw, etc.

I am extremely honored to be a part of Bahad Zu'bu and as a student of one of the legend and most desirable Filipino martial arts Grandmaster in the world, Grandmaster Yuli Romo."



My Experience of Bahad Zu'bu

By Guro Ah Loong



Grandmaster Romo and Guro Loong
visiting there and when I mentioned that I was interested in learning the blades I was pointed directly at him. Master Yuli suggested to we should meet up for an initial training session after which I could decide whether I wanted to learn from him or not; we agreed to meet up near where I was staying the following day and so the training began! Any interest that I had in learning the blades turned into a full-blown passion as whatever niggling doubts that I might have had

It was in early September 2006 when I travelled to Philippines when I, quite by accident, met Grandmaster Yuli Romo of Bahad Zu'bu Kali. I have been involved with Martial Arts since an early age and I have been training in Wing Chun Gung Fu for the past 22 years. However, despite my interest in knife combat, I had never had the opportunity to look more deeply into the Filipino combat arts. I therefore, viewed my visit to Philippines, as my chance to learn more about this art little I knew what profound effect it would have on me as a Martial Arts practitioner.

Armed only with an address given to be by a friend I found myself in a Martial Arts training hall. As luck would have it Master Yuli happened to be



about whether I should train with Grand Master Yuli disappeared into an oblivion.

One of the very first things that Master Yuli said was that Bahad Zu'bu was not Martial Arts or self defense; he said Bahad Zu'bu is a combat art and, as if this alone was not enough to wet my appetite, his teaching methods were inspiring. Master Yuli's immense knowledge of combat arts, his no-nonsense approach, his ability to impart his knowledge and the very practical nature of Bahad Zu'bu got me well and truly hooked. I was also amazed to notice the strong similarities between Zu'bu and Wing Chun both in attitude towards combat, flexibility of movements/techniques and the underlying principles; I found that the very qualities that got me addicted to Wing Chun abundantly present in Bahad Zu'bu. Subsequent meetings only helped strengthen my passion and the more my understating of the Bahad Zu'bu grew the more I fell in love with it. For me, it was learning from Master Yuli was one of the best things that I had the luck to experience. Furthermore, I can carry on training and learning Kali without having to sacrifice my Wing Chun; although I am a bit of a purist and keep the two systems separate I can help notice how the two combat arts complement and act as a catalyst for one another.

I have by no means finished learning from Master Yuli. In fact I am already planning to return sometimes next year to fine tune what I have learnt thus far and, hopefully, get a little more closer to perfection!

Ah Loong

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Karunongang Lihim

The Secret Wisdom of Dakilang Guro Epifanio "Yuli" Romo Jr.

By Michael Blackgrave



I have recently returned from my training with Grandmaster Yuli Romo Jr. the founder of BaHad Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo (Mangtaas era), on the island of Ponson, Camotes, Philippines. Grandmaster Yuli is without a doubt one of the absolute best people I have ever trained with, his skills are of the highest caliber and his philosophy on life and his culture is as deep and vast as the ocean I crossed to receive such knowledge. In this interview I tried to touch on subjects that go beyond mere physical technique of his art and to delve a bit into his personal philosophies on life, culture and his self titled counter clockwise ways.

MB: *Grandmaster Romo, the word kali is very controversial, some say it is made up and only propagated in the west, what is your take on this?*

GM Romo: Kali as an ancient fighting art is a myth. In America, Dan Inosanto propagated the word and the myth, and I also rode along with this. It has been a tool to promote the Philippine Martial arts.

MB: *What is the difference between Arnis and Eskrima if any?*

GM Romo: Arnis came from the word armor or to harness and eskrima means to skirmish.

MB: *Technique wise is there a difference?*

GM Romo: I see no difference because of dialect influences through out the Philippine Islands it has been refined into one. They are both human nature.

MB: *What is your personal philosophy as it pertains to life and to BaHaD Zu'Bu KI?*

GM Romo: My end goal is to see the true martial arts promoted as art not just killing or combat, that ability is in each one of us as practitioners. Like a fork on a table one can use it for eating or one can use it for stabbing. BaHad Zu'Bu is not like a gun, which is made primarily for killing, my system is life and we are not weapon specific. Life for me is a big smile.

MB: *Grandmaster Yuli what is your goal for BaHad Zu'Bu as a system?*

GM Romo: BaHad Zu'Bu is just a name for business, my goal is to depart my knowledge and wisdom to those who desire it, in this way it can never be labeled and thus it will always grow even after I have gone.

MB: *With our world becoming more dangerous and the increase in so-called lethal martial arts being taught (as in kill, kill), how do you feel about this?*

GM Romo: This is the nature of a human being who is scared; they have no understanding of truth in the warrior path or in the martial arts as a whole.

MB: *What in your opinion needs to change to make people see differently for the sake of the arts?*

GM Romo: Proper understanding and proper guidance from true instructors. The culture and philosophy of the arts must be embraced by teachers and students alike.

MB: *In your opinion what are the crucial ingredients to produce a top-level practitioner?*

GM Romo: The fruit of combat must be trained, if one has the awareness of the fruit he will be able to choose what is necessary in that crucial time, but in the end it is up to the individual to choose wisely.

MB: *What is your duty as a teacher to lead one there?*



GM Romo: It is a gift earned by those who are worthy not just for anyone, and a proper good human being and student will know when he or she is ready to except the knowledge, it is a process of patience by both teacher and student.

MB: *At what age do you feel is appropriate for teaching children and why?*

GM Romo: I believe ten years old is the best age for boys and girls. At this age the child has no ego and a high energy level, which needs proper channeling into something positive.

MB: *What shouldn't be taught to children?*

GM Romo: When teaching children we should not teach the mindset of evil or killing only positive and good things. In their practices time will come when the sacred knowledge will be revealed but as a child the goal is for health, fun and culture. Let them be kids.

MB: *Do you feel that your system is conducive to teaching woman?*

GM Romo: With woman students the teacher must not emphasize the combative nature of the system, most woman will think twice if it involves violence, it is not a woman's nature. Later on if real danger is present she will react due to her training, she will be able to fight without ever having realized that her training was combative all along.

MB: *What is the difference between teaching a beginner and a skilled practitioner?*

GM Romo: With a raw student it is easier but the understanding and purpose may be dangerous due to the lack of understanding in a beginner's mind. To teach a skilled person is hard because his old knowledge is still there and many times the practitioner refuses to adapt, he may know in his mind but his body does not respond.



MB: *If you had the chance to go back and change one thing in your martial path what would it be?*

GM Romo: My moral values were questionable when I was younger, I was very egotistical with a hot temper, this is what I would change, but I have since that time learned through experience and I am no longer that same person. With age comes wisdom and with wisdom comes internal peace. Man is like a bamboo tree, when young it shoots up straight with arrogance unwilling to yield, but when one ages, like the bamboo you begin to bow with grace and respect. Knowledge is humbling, knowledge, honesty, and justice that is my wisdom.

MB: *You had mentioned that a global goal for teaching the arts is your main focus, what must be done to keep politics out of your system?*

GM Romo: Politics are always present there is no escape. The individuals within the system must make

the effort to keep politics from embracing them as individuals, if not it spreads as a cancer and can destroy any system from within. I cannot control an individual's beliefs and daily agendas, if one chooses politics that is his choice. Politics are mere show business; true martial arts knowledge is beyond that.

MB: *What drives Dakilang Guro Epifanio "Yuli" Romo Jr. to such devotion for his student's and art?*

GM Romo: I have always felt that I am guided by a spiritual warrior, even as a boy I was aware of this, my name Romo comes from a warrior clan, I have no choice in the matter, I am guided by more than just me.

MB: *Grandmaster Romo thank you for the interview and for the training and knowledge you have bestowed upon me.*

GM Romo: You are most welcome.

This interview was conducted on October 25, 2006 at 8:00a.m. on the island of Ponson, in the town of Pilar in the island chain of Camotes, Philippines.

Much thanks to Jose PePe Paradela for his gracious hospitality and for his interpreting the words of Grandmaster Yuli so that his answers are clear, concise and purely his.

Many thanks to Punong Guro Peter Lewis for making the introduction's on my behalf to Grandmaster Yuli.

*Punong Guro Michael D. Blackgrave
BaHad Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo
(Mangtaas era)*

*Punong Guro Blackgrave teaches BaHad Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo (Mangtaas era) in San Antonio Texas, he is also the head of the western headquarters (USA) under the order of Dakilang Guro Epifanio "Yuli" Romo Jr.
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Unarmed Defense Against a Knife Assault



Stand off...



As the attacker prepares to thrust, Grandmaster Yuli readies his hand....



Grandmaster Yuli leans back to accommodate the full extension of the attacker's arm.



Grandmaster Yuli uses his chest/stomach to trap the attacker's knife arm, and applies force, upward to gain leverage.



Grandmaster Yuli then throws an "enganyo" (feint) to which the attacker reacts with his free hand.



Grandmaster Yuli then re-directs the attacker's left hand toward his own waiting hand, under the attacker's knife arm.



This enables Grandmaster Yuli to control both of the attacker's upper limbs.



Finally, Grandmaster Yuli drives downwards to break both of the attacker's arms.

ZU'BU KALI ILUSTRISIMO



Member



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Yuli Romo - www.yuli-romo.com

Zu'bu Kali Ilustrisimo - zubu-kali.co.uk

Worcester Eskrima Club - worcester-eskrima.co.uk

Zu'bu KI Singapore - www.zubu-kali.com

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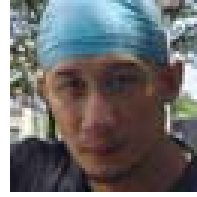


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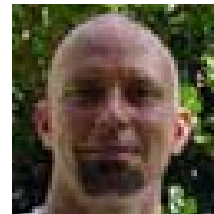


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Testimonials

“One of the original Five Pillars of Kali Ilustrisimo, (Master) Yuli Romo adds depth, variety and a broad range of fighting and teaching experience to the legacy of GM Antonio "Tatang" Ilustrisimo. Yuli is not only a colleague but, more importantly, a very dear, sincere, and good friend.

Yuli possesses legitimate and documented direct and senior lineage to Tatang Ilustrisimo.”

Master Reynaldo S. Galang

Chief Instructor - Bakbakan WHQ
International Director for the Bakbakan organization
USA

“I have known Yuli Romo since 1981. I met him on a trip to the East in that year when I watched he and his teacher, Antonio Ilustrisimo training along with about ten other students and instructors.

Yuli is indeed qualified to carry on the Ilustrisimo tradition and Antonio also told me personally that either Tony Diego and/or Yuli Romo could take over from him when he

died (which has now happened). I was very impressed with Yuli's speed and accuracy and no-mind state when using the stick."

Master Erle Montague

Tai Chi and Chinese Martial Arts
Australia / UK

"Although Master Yuli Romo is a guy who likes to joke a lot and is very funny, when it comes to fighting, he is very proficient, especially at disarming techniques."

Master Nonoy Gallano

Trankada Aldabon System
Canada

"Master Yuli's movements are unlike anything I have seen before. He displays total fluidity, direction and control. I would have to say that he is one of the most underrated knife practitioners and instructors in the world.

I have the deepest respect for Master Yuli, and it was a very humbling experience to meet and train with him. Not only did he travel for four hours to teach me, but he still had to travel home afterwards, and was quite happy to do so."

Damian Halforty

Bakbakan International
New Zealand

"There is only one word to describe Master Yuli – dynamic! He is able to do the same moves as Tatang, and is a legend in his own lifetime."

Guro Alex Ercia

Kombatan
USA

"Yuli and I go a long way back, I met him along with GM Ilustrisimo. We became good friends from thereon, even if we came from different backgrounds.

We enjoy exchanging skills when chance permits, but often end-up with exchanging tons of laughter instead. I boldly say that he is one of the few who mastered the skills and techniques of Tatang."

Maestro Roberto 'Bert' Labaniego

Espada y Daga System / Lightning Scientific Arnis
Philippines

"Not only is Master Yuli Romo one of the original and most senior students of the late Grandmaster Antonio 'Tatang' Ilustrisimo, but he also holds the torch of the well-respected Romo Clan Eskrima method from Cebu. He is a true master technician in the art of Eskrima and his knowledge is equally impressive."

Master Mark V. Wiley

Integrated Eskrima
USA

Gallery

Dakilang Guro
Epifanio 'Yuli' Romo Jr.
BaHad Zu'Bu Kali Ilustrisimo
[Mangtaas era]





Epifanio 'Yuli' Romo and Christopher 'Topher' Ricketts



Future Generation



Grandmaster Epifanio 'Yuli' Romo makes a presentation to Punong Guro Peter Lewis.

ZU'BU KALI ILUSTRISIMO



WORCESTER ESKRIMA CLUB

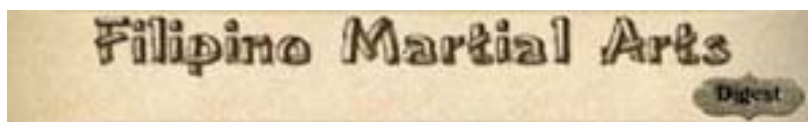




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