Cebuano Eskrima
Beyond the Myth

Celestino C. Macachor and Ned R. Nepangue, M.D.
The FMA Informative would like to personally thank Mr. Celestino Macachor, for all the information and assistance that was provided for this issue.

The FMA Informative representative met Ned Nepangue in 2008 while in Manila, Philippines and there was just a little conversation about a few things, due to time restraints. Mr. Nepangue was a very busy person researching some new material for the future.

However the FMA Informative while visiting the Philippines in March of 2015 and in Cebu, was very fortunate to get to meet and talk with Celestino Macachor. It was an honor to finally meet with the co-author of Cebuano Eskrima: Beyond the Myth.

To start the issue from Mr. Macachor the article “New Theories on the Origins of Eskrima”. Which was published in Rapid Journal who granted the FMA Informative permission to re-publish it.

Next the FMA Informative representative was able to talk and discuss somethings with Mr. Macachor on the subject of the Filipino martial arts about the past, present and future. And also to ask a few questions about the book “Cebuano Eskrima: Beyond the Myth.”

The final article is by Ned Nepangue which points out some facts on Kali.

What is really misunderstood and repugnant for the Cebuano martial artists, is the way throughout the world it is believed that the Filipino martial arts is basically of a Moro origin. That is far from the truth.

The book “Cebuano Eskrima: Beyond the Myth” – authored by Ned R. Nepangue, M.D. and Celestino C. Macachor is a must have book, if interested or wanting to know about the Filipino martial arts. Basically about Cebuano Eskrima it takes away a lot of fictional stories and brings facts to the table.

Cebuano Eskrima: Beyond the Myth boldly unravels with compelling and provocative hypothesis on the Hispanic origins of the Filipino Martial Arts known as eskrima, arnis and estokada.

The authors present prima facie evidence on the fraud of the supposedly precursor art called kali.

A more plausible theory on the origins of eskrima are presented in startling detail from its early beginnings as a defense against Moro pirates and slave traders and its later fusion with Spanish fencing through the Jesuit warrior priests during the pivotal years 1635-1644, the height of Spanish rapier fencing in Europe during the Renaissance.

It also presents a comprehensive chronology on the development of eskrima in Cebu, a meticulous commentary of Cebuano pioneers and innovators of eskrima and elucidates the pre-eminence of Visayans in the art of eskrima / arnis / estokada.

As both authors are practitioners of this martial art, technicalities in eskrima never before detailed in other materials on the subject are carefully discussed in the book.
Regional ethnic pride seems to be the biggest obstacle in acquiring an unbiased historically correct account on the origins and evolution of Eskrima. The Ilonggos in West Visayas insist on the story of the ten Datus of Borneo that is widely believed to have brought with them an ancient form of bladed combat known as Kali. Contrary to the theory on Kali as the progenitor of Eskrima /Arnis /Estokada is a relative offensive tactics.

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Mr. Macachor article which was published in three parts, in the Rapid Journal a Filipino magazine for (Research and Propagation for Internal Arts Development), which came out in the following issues Volume 6 Number 2 through Volume 6 Number 4.

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And finally part three and the final installment of the origin of Eskrima, which also mentions the important contributions of Spanish fencers to the art of Filipino Eskrima.

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found the land fertile and the sea abundant with fish. He lived there for a while, but he later returned to his native town and brought back with him his family and some relatives to immigrate to his new-found home. Eventually, he became the ruler of the settlement.

The Muslims also direct- ed their raids to Moalboal, being already a prosperous settlement. But led by Sabanal, the inhabitants successfully repelled the invaders. They attributed their victory to Sabanal’s oracion. When he died, it is said that he was buried by the shore marked by his magic cane. To this day, a part of it could still be seen. In his honor, the people named a street along the shore.

1.2 Spanish Period - Bantayan Islands

Kinataran Island, which belongs to the Bantayan group of Islands, is the birthplace of GM Floro Villabrillete and GM Alfonso Ilustrismo. A colleague Juris Fernandez who comes from Doong Island, told us about his Great Grandfather Tata Lucio Pastor who is one of the longest living Eskrima doors of the island. Tata Lucio Pastor who lived up to 106 years old used bakwah a fire hardened wood cut from mangroves as fighting stick. The lineage of Tata Lucio Pastor’s Eskrima is untraceable but the fact remains that his Eskrima is indigenous to the island of Doong and that it was probably developed as a repulsive superior weaponry and martial skills.

“The Parish of Bantayan was then under the direct control and supervision of the Archdiocese of Manila. Fr. de Ocampos then, built a church on top of the mountain. The church was again erected and was again put on fire by the marauding Moros.”

The stone church as we now see is the third church erected. Construction of this church began on 1839 and completed on year 1840. It was Fr. Doroteo An- drade and del Rosario who built the church with a tall belfry and tall walls that surround the plaza.

The Parish of Bantayan was put on fire by the Moros. Fr. de Ocampos then, built the church under the direct control and supervision of the Archdiocese of Manila. The church was again erected and was again put on fire by the marauding Moros.

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1.3 Pillar, Camotes Island, Cebu

The next story from Laville de Paula recalls another vivid historical account on the use of strategy and Martial Arts against marauding Moro pirates and probably the importation Leyte Eskrima to Cebu:

“In search for a better place to live in, a family from Cabalian Leyte crossed the Visayan sea to a nearby island and they became the nucleus of a settlement in Cebu which grew into a town. Solferino Bornay was attracted by the fertile soil and the rich fishing grounds of a place called Falcavan. It was so named as there was a spring (Palawan in Visayan) near the island, called Palawan. It was so named as there was a spring (Palawan in Visayan) near the island, called Palawan.”

Theory 1.

The Province of Cebu stretching from Bantayan Islands in the North to Santander in the South became the focal point in the development of Eskrima and that its development and tactical use outlived the Moro raiders. The Art of Eskrima was also effective against Spanish and American colonizers and also against the Japa- nese invaders. More heroic stories of the coastal towns in Cebu from Evangeline Laville de Paula’s book. Cebu in Legend and History:

Theory 4.

1.4 The Filipino Martial Arts that we know today was a deadly chemistry of Macabebe, Cebuano, Ilonggo and other Visayan Martial Arts. These diverse ethnic groups became brothers in arms and their meticulous recruitment by the Spaniards was intended to match the skills of the Moro warriors. The only bridge to a cultural and language barrier amongst this mixture of Visayans and Capam- pangans was their mutual hatred of Moros and the cross-pollination of combat skills. Chapter 9 of Vic Hurley’s Swiss of the Kris recalls accurately the recruitment of Pampango, Cebuano and Ilonggo conscripts during the admin- istration of Governor General Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera to fight against the Moros of Sulu. Hurtley credited Corcuera as the most successful Governor General during the Spanish colonial period to have successfully contained the Moros of Sulu. Here are some excerpts of Chapter 9 to support our theory:

“The year 1635 had wit- nessed the arrival in Manila of a very efficient Governor-General and a perfect soldier. The coming of Don Sebastian Hurtado de Cor- cuera marked a period of success for the Spanish arms which was not to be repeated again until the mighty soldier Juan Arolas arrived 250 years later.

Whatever Corcuera’s emotions as he gazed down the valley to the horde of brown kris men waiting to resist him, there can be no question as to his valor. At a flourish of a mailed fist, the Spanish plumes disappeared into the wave of Moros.

We are indebted to Father Crevas for an account of this campaign. From him we learn that Corcuera, with a squadron of small vessels and a dozen flat boats, entered the river, defying Correlat. “The forces which he had were five compa- nies; his own of 150 men, those of Captain Nicholas Gonzalez and Lorenzo Orella de Ugalde of 100 men each; another company of sailors; another of Pampangos; all the rest were rabbles and pioneers. The same day he reached the river, he entered, with seventy men, the court of Correlat, defended by the first name for Zamboanga, and from this station he soon reduced the towns of Caldana and Bahura.”

After Captain de Chaves’ force of 800 well-armed Spaniards and 1000 Visayans had cleared the peninsula temporarily of hostile Moros, the construction of one of the finest forts in the East was put into execution. On June 23, 1635, the foundations of the grand fortress of Masarram de del Pilan was laid by Father Vera, engineer of the Spanish arms.”
more than two thousand armed Moros.”

As we consider the caliber of the men who opposed Corcuera that day, we wonder how he kept his small company from being overwhelmed. The Spaniards had arquebuses, but they were slow and laborious to reload. A great deal of the combat must have been hand-to-hand. Pitted to religious fervor, a Moro was the equal to any Spaniard in hand-to-hand battle, and yet Corcuera survived to win a brilliant victory.

de Corcuera remains as one of the conspicuous figures of the Spanish conquest of the island of Mindanao. A perfect soldier. His reward for distinguished service in the field of warfare was the command of a large vessel with 760 Spanish infantrymen who were divided into a total of seven companies. Using Zamboanga as base, the troops underwent rigorous training with the advice and help of Datu Sulakman of Zamboanga and Dato Pating of the Lutoos.

Chavacano, the native dialect of the Zamboangaenos is a hodgepodge of bastardized Spanish, Cebuano, Yakan and Subanon dialects.

“Indeed, matters reached such a state that before the end of the year wars were ordered out for another attack on Jolo. Four regiments of infantry and a corps of artillery aided the garrisons. Included was a battalion of Cebuanos (sic) who sought revenge for the Moro raids. The wives of the Cebuanos (sic) emulated Lysistrata in reverse. Every wife took an oath before Father Ibanez to deny her husband, all of their favors if the Cebuano men turned their backs to the Moros.

In the battle of Jolo, Father Ibarra lost his life in the assault on a Moro cotta. The good Father traced his cassock about his waist and plunged into the thickest of the battle. The Cebuanos (sic) performed prodigies of valor and Jolo fell again. The seat of the Suluwale was removed across the island to Maguindan, and the Moros paid regular visits to Jolo to slaughter the Spanish garrison which remained.”

It is therefore not unthinkable that the Cebuano survivors/ veterans of this campaign later passed on their martial arts skills to the rest of Cebu and the Visayan Islands. The foregoing text also bolsters our theory on the active participation of Spanish priests in combat and their influence in the development of Eskrima. Lavilles de Paula in her narrative told of the same pattern of pillage and plunder in the towns of Sibonga, Malita with its famous Katayan sa Hari Tower, Carear, Oslob, Naga and Talisay. Practically all the 52 coastal municipalities of Cebu had a history of recurring Moro forays. Given this statistics and taking into account the brave Sri Vishayan ancestry of the Cebuanos, Ilonggos and Warays, we can deduce that a raw form of Martial Arts started to take shape in defense of their coastal communities. Later the Spanish authorities took advantage of the Martial skills of the native Cebuanos and their animosity against the Moros during the Corcuera administration. And with the subsequent alliance with the Pampangos and a more deadly and highly developed martial arts that we now call as Eskrima, Arnis, Es- toque or Eskolada later flourished.

4. From the Book The Philippine Islands, Chapter XV by Blair & Robertson is a narrative of Moro raids in Leyte, Bohol and Panay Islands.

“That year of 1634 was so quiet and so barren of events worthy of remembrance that I shall not dwell long upon it, for there is nothing of which I have heard to do me, unless it be the raid of the Mindanao enemy into the island of Leyte, and the depredations that they committed there with the license permitted to them in seeing that there was no attempt made in Manila to check them.

On Sunday, December 3, 1634, the Moro Manana arrived with eight galleys at the village of Ogmis, (Oro Moro) leaving behind in that of Bopan the rest of the vessels, which they brought in their fleet. Fifty of our Indios went out to resist them, but being unable to fight so many, they gradually retired to a little fort, possessed by the village. They thought that they would be able to resist the pirates there, being encouraged by their minister, Father Juan de Corral, of the Society of Jesus, and they did so for some time, until the Moros, knowing that the church was higher than the fort, entered it and our men, not being able to fight so many, they gradually retired to a little fort, possessed by the village. 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Again, the foregoing narrative demonstrated the cunning and bravery of the early Christian Boholanos and Ilonggos of Panay in repulsing the Moro raids.

Theory 5.

Eskrima / Arnis undoubtedly is a product of Filipino genius, however, we cannot also downplay the significant contributions of Spanish military/civilian fencers especially the clergy in its development.

5.1 Boljoon

Boljoon's history presents proof of Spanish Warrior priests training Cebuano natives and engaging Moro raiders in hand to hand combat. We can further surmise that the early techniques of Eskrima such as the “faible”, “forete”, “crosada” were coined by these warrior priests. Erlinda Kintanar Alburo recounts in her book Samah: Essays for the Centennial of the Revolution in Cebu which is a collection of essays on the Cebuano insurrection that a Spanish priest Fr. Angel Maestro taught Cebuano revolutionary hero Leon Kilat the fundamentals of Eskrima.

Here are more excerpts from Evangeline Lavilles de Paula’s book Cebu in History and Legend:

“Boljoon is one of the oldest towns in the South. And it is also the most quaint and picturesque. Its narrow coastal plains are bordered by cliffs and indentant hills which has a commanding view of Bohol Strait.

According to Marin Morales, the town was created in 1594. The parish was established a year later. But this was disputed by Fr. Blanco, asserting that the parish was founded in 1609. The church of Boljoon was started by Fr. Manuel Cordero and completed by Fr. Julian Bermejo, who also built the convent that was finished in 1641. The convent is L-shaped like a monastery surrounded by walls and tile roof.

Boljoon church is a veritable showcase of old and intricate carvings and bar util. It still has the Spanish churchyard beside it. According to Taminho, of all Cebu’s churches, the Boljoon church best gives one a sense of the Philippine colonial past. J. Thewman describes the church relatively well preserved, except for its ceiling mural in 1580.

The Boljoon church is one of the finest examples of Cebuano religious architecture. Its tower is unusual because it is Islamic in character; it is square, rather than curved, making it look more like a fortress than anything. Its rectangular belfry, built in 1701, has four windows used to show cannons to defend against Moro pirates. The sound of its silver bells reached Oslob and Badian. But in 1802, they were stolen by Muslim horsemen led by Datu Overeadin. Because of their weight, the Moro vinta sunk. Fray Antonio Moglan, O.S., was the warrior-priest who led the Boljoon militiamen.

One of the parish priests who worked hard to repulse the Muslim pirates was Fr. Julian Bermejo. A chain of watchtowers was constructed under his direction. This chain ran along the shoreline from Panta Talon (Santander) to Manjuyod. It was later extended up to Casar, for a total length of 96 kms. He built a large quadrangular house made of masonry and its walls were at least a meter thick; its four corners were reinforced with loopholes. The townsmen called it dako bangay. The Governor-general, impressed, sent to the necessary artillery equipment for this fortress. Fr. Bermejo also installed a telegraphic system for the purpose of communitary communication among towns in cases of impending raids.

Old Boljoon had four dependent barangays: Mambog, Ibalan, and Talon. The first three were situated near the beach, while Talon was perched high up in the mountains serving as an observation post for the marauding Moros.

Two Moro raids served as an observation post for the marauding Moros.

5.2 Also from Chapter 11 of Swish of the Kris, Hurley gave credit to the bravery of the Spanish priests:

“The history of the Spanish occupation of the Philippines is filled with reference to the bravery of the military priests of the Jesuit order. These embattled missionary-soldiers, cross in left hand and Toledo blade in right, were in the first wave of every attack on the Moros.”

The pattern of Moro raids from the shores of Bantayan Islands, Cebu, Antique, Iloilo, Leyte, Dumagute to Patmegua matched perfectly with the dominance of these coastal provinces in today’s Filipino Martial Arts of Eskrima, Arnis, and Estokada. Like the Big Bang Theory, the Filipino Martial Arts exploded in the years 1635-1644 during the term of Governor General Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera, the military genius that pinned the best warriors of the Visayas and Luzon against the fearless Moros of Sulu. The dominant Filipino martial arts organizations worldwide that originated from these once fertile Moro hunting grounds are Doce Pares, Kali Kalistrimo, Pektis-Tiesia and Giron Arnis Eskrima. There are also several dozens of obscure styles that have taken root from these provinces like, Bergonia Style, Toledo-Colloado (Pangasinan -once part of Pampanga province), Moro-moro (either Samar or Bohol origins), Cadena de Mano (probably Panay), Abanico de Mano (probably Bohol), Bokator (Cambodia) and Giha Arnis Eskrima. There are also several dozens of obscure styles that have taken root from these provinces like, Bergonia Style, Toledo-Colloado (Pangasinan -once part of Pampanga province), Moro-moro (either Samar or Bohol origins), Cadena de Mano (probably Panay), Abanico de Mano (probably Bohol), Bokator (Cambodia) and Giha Arnis Eskrima.

“Arnisadores prefer teachers who show by their own light, like the sun, rather than the planets that shine by the reflected light of their school or teacher. That is why ama- arnisadores like Jose Caballero (Cebuano) Armi Presca (Bulog) and Edgar Salite (Waray) claim to have created their own styles, rather than to have inherited them. Incidentally, masters from the North are more apt to be self-deprecating while masters from the South are more prone to boast. This is due to social convention and personal dynamics and has little to do with actual ability. But in the country of hard sell this could be one reason why arts from the south is spreading throughout the world, while arts from the North remains in the shadows.”

Leon Kilat
Reading between the lines, it is another vain effort by people of the North to muddle the history of the Filipino martial arts. Reyes is no different from the pretentious FMA historians out to skew the facts about the Filipino Martial Arts and as a loyal practitioner of Kali Ilustrisimo, in effect he is banging himself in the head or unless he will concoct a story that the Ilustrisimo system originated in Tondo or Ilocos.

I’ve always been a proud Cebuano, however I find it difficult to believe that Lapu-lapu defeated Magellan with his superior Kali skills as portrayed by the pseudo historians in the Filipino martial arts circles. For all I care Magellan could have tripped on the corals off the shores of Mactan and bashed his head on the rocks. The “battle” that took place as historians tell us was actually a lopsided massacre. Magellan only had less than a 50 man reconnaissance force before the arrival of the Spanish invaders tell us was actually a lop sided massacre. Magellan only had less than a 50 man reconnaissance patrol (not a full scale invasion by any military standard) against more than one thousand men of Lapu-lapu, and you call that a martial art victory? Pure hogwash! As the first Asian to repel a foreign invader, Lapu-lapu’s niche in Philippine history is already assured, but please let us stop spicing up the story on the “Battle” of Mactan as an epic display of our hero’s Martial Arts prowess.

I have nothing against organizations calling their Art Kali, that is just fine for branding purposes, but laying claim that it is the mother of Eskrima / Arnis and that it originated in Muslim Mindanao is a contentious issue. Kali is a contradiction in terms, where can you find a practitioner of Kali who calls himself “Kalisador” or “Kalista”- no less than Grandmaster Antonio Ilustrisimo preferred to be called an Eskrimador, or even our myopic friend Pedro calls himself an Arnisador. Master Ben Largusa of Largusa Villablerte calls his late mentor Grandmaster Floro Villablerte an Eskrimador.

Let us assume for the purposes of discussion that indeed Kali was practiced by the Ten Da-tus of Panay as what Mark Wiley suggested in his book the Filipino Martial Arts.

“Legends claim that ten Datus (chieftains) left Baracoa and settled in Panay where they established the Bothoan in the twelfth century. The Bothoan was a school where the Datus taught Kali along with academic subjects and agriculture. It was a kind of preparatory school for tribal leaders.”

But then again, as he said it is just a legend - told and retold and embellished for several generations that any scholar in his right mind would not take with a grain of salt. While we did have lectures about the Code of Maragtas and Kalantaw,(which is already proven as a fake) I can’t recall any of the history my teachers back in college mentioning a sophisticated system of combat like Kali during the pre-Hispanic period. Such a wonderful subject as an ancient Martial Art would have been a good piece of classroom discussion. So, how could our teachers miss that during those years when Bruce Lee’s Eskrima exhibition in the movie Enter the Dragon was still very fresh in our memory. Again, granting that Bothoan really existed and Kali was one of the lessons in their curriculum . . . well, what was true in 1500s or prior to that, was not necessarily true to other adjacent islands . . .

no internet cafe then, no text messaging and no TransAsia plying the route.

I would like to argue that assumption of Mark Wiley by again quoting Paul Morrow:

“...So, how do we tell what is true and what is false in Philippine history? Here is a rule of thumb: Any account that assigns an exact date to an event in the Philippines before the arrival of the Spanish in 1521 is probably not true. At present there is only one exception to that rule. That is the date recorded on the Langgan Copperplate Inscription of 900 A.D. which was proved by skilled investigation. At time goes on, more and more exceptions to the rule of thumb will arise due to the efforts of the increasing number of new historians who desire to correct the lies that were taught to Filipinos in the past.”

If indeed Kali is a very old term and has something to do with warriorship then everyone must be familiar with it like the words baraw, tameng, sondang, bangkaw . . .and it would have imprinted its own version of native nipa wine called Pa-uroy, the town of Canti- lan Surigao del Sur is also famous for its finely forged pituni, but there is no one here who can handle the weapon with at least rudimentary skill. From Dumingag, I was referred to a Muslim blade-smith in Margaotubig, Zamboanga del Sur, but the poor artisan I encountered does not even know the word Kali. I was expecting to finally get the chance to meet an authentic Kali man in the person of Grandmaster Billy Baeclo of Ogmiz City. To my disappointment, he traced the lineage of his Abaniko to Sunkito to Prancis Ybanez of Sibonga, Cebu. I did find an assortment of Barongs and authentic Krises in Lanao, but they were mostly ornamental. I tried to evade the peddlers themselves to bring me to the Muslim swordsmen, and what did I get? "Igo, bangkaw lang awal Kali." (Brother, just buy my mat, no Kali). So where’s the elusive Kali man?

No one will question the Moro people’s fortitude in battle, but whatever form of sword fighting they practice, I have no doubt in my mind that it is not Kali. Silat and Kuntao are indigenious to the Island of Basilan but none of its techniques are analogous to what we see in “Kali”, Eskrima, or Arnis. Or maybe they really don’t have any organized sword fighting system after all and relied purely on suicidal frenzy and the sharpness of their Kris at the height of mayhem. Knowing the typical Mindanao Muslim’s penchant for announcing in huge streamers petty accomplishments such as passing the Teacher’s Board Exams, their “sticker-happy” cars, gun-toting warlords and flamboyant display of jewelry, I find it incredible how such a Martial Art known as Kali that they supposedly invented can be kept secret until today.

So where does our theory on the origin of the first Filipino Martial Art fit in? Simple logic, given our hypothesis:

- Years 1635-1644 The Explosions of FMA during the administration of Governor General Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuaera
- Recruitment of Pampango, Cebuano, Ilonggo and Warays and cross pollination of raw martial skills with aid of Spanish fencers.
- Warrior priest actively engaged in combat alongside Christian Indios and Spanish Regulars

Coincided by no less than the Spanish colonial masters of the era, the single most definitive word that best described their engagement with the indomitable Moros of Sulu was - ESCRIMA!

Bibliography:

"Cebu in Legend and History” by: Evangeline Lavilles de Paula
"Sumad: Essays for the Centennial of the Revolution in Cebu” by Erlinda Kintanar Albuero (Center for Cebuano Studies)
"Ancestors/Heredity), Kalisud (Confusion), Kaliwat (Relatives/ Ancestors/Heredity), Kalisu (Difficulty), Kalibanga (Diarrhea/ LBMY), Kalimotaw (Eye Pupil), Kaligro (Bath), Kalit (Sudden), Kalihim (Secretary)... okay let us disagree the letters . . . Kihat (Thunder), Kilas (Agility) . . . and where and when did kris become kalis? What language is that? Espe- ranto?

For twenty-two years I have traveled the entire breadth of Mindanao as a Salesman while on the side searching in vain for the origins of the weapon we’ve used and read so much in Filipino martial arts books. Without luck, everywhere I went dodging bullets and 105-mm howitzers whistling past my ears, from Ipi, Zamboanga del Sur to boundaries of Bukidnon, Davao and Cotabato I always end up in a quagmire. I tried Ned’s suggestion to search for him in a place noted for making bolos. Aside from their own version of native nipa wine called Pa-uroy, the town of Canti- lan Surigao del Sur is also famous for its finely forged pituni, but there is no one here who can handle the weapon with at least rudimentary skill. From Dumingag, I was referred to a Muslim blade-smith in Margaotubig, Zamboanga del Sur, but the poor artisan I encountered does not even know the word Kali. I was expecting to finally get the chance to meet an authentic Kali man in the person of Grandmaster Billy Baeclo of Ogmiz City. To my disappointment, he traced the lineage of his Abaniko to Sunkito to Prancis Ybanez of Sibonga, Cebu. I did find an assortment of Barongs and authentic Krises in Lanao, but they were mostly ornamental. I tried to evade the peddlers themselves to bring me to the Muslim swordsmen, and what did I get? "Igo, bangkaw lang awal Kali." (Brother, just buy my mat, no Kali). So where’s the elusive Kali man?

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Coidined by no less than the Spanish colonial masters of the era, the single most definitive word that best described their engagement with the indomitable Moros of Sulu was - ESCRIMA!
There is no “Cebuano Eskrima” as a system of Stickfighting the author’s use this term for convenience to summarize all the systems and styles of martial arts considered traditional to Cebu in this book."

“This book is not an attempt to “demonize” the Moro people whom we highly esteem for their bravery in battle, but to present a more logical chronological events based on historical facts, first-hand accounts by reliable resource persons, archaeological evidence and plain common sense on the true origin of Eskrima / Arnis / Estocada."

FMA Informative: How did it come about that you had the idea of writing a book on Cebuano Eskrima? And when did Mr. Nepangue become involved and did he come to you or you to him?

Mr. Macachor: Ned visited me for the first time in 1999 while I was still assigned in Ozaiz as Nestle Supervisor. He actually wanted to meet my elusive mentor Eric Olavides and was aware that he couldn’t hook up with the latter if he can’t get to me first. Ned saw me wearing a Kali T-shirt that I had printed a local shop. That’s when he started to challenge me that kali, the supposedly mother of Filipino martial arts is a myth. Ned also tried to cajole me to write for the Rapid Journal Magazine, but I was hesitant at first because I never had that much confidence in my writing skills. You know, I was such an underachiever but to present a more logical chronology of events based on historical facts, first-hand accounts by reliable resource persons, archaeological evidence and plain common sense on the true origin of Eskrima / Arnis / Estocada.

FMA Informative: Once getting started on the book, what was involved in deciding what would be in the book, and why?

Mr. Macachor: The book although titled Cebuano Eskrima, basically anchored on refuting the kali story. We tried to keep it as balanced as possible. Ned did most of the research on most of the history of the prominent clubs and personalities in Cebu Eskrima. Luck, Divine intervention, whatever you call it was on our side when we started on the book project. My Nestle colleague then MILO Sports Executive Pat Goc-oong told me of a legendary equestrian Eskrimador in southern Cebu by the name of Amboy Kidlat who was the mentor his granduncle Felix “Titi” Goc-oong. Titi Goc-oong who once worked as a sacrament in Hilo, Hawaii was deported back to the country for killing an American in a juego todos duel. Felix Goc-oong passed on his Eskrima to Julian, Pat Goc-oong’s father. All buanno the legendary Antonio Ilustrisimo. I forgot the title of the article, but when it came out on the internet, this paragraph was removed. I told Ned to inform the editor of the Rapid Journal my open disgust and anger of this statement. I am a proud Cebuano, and I’d break anyone’s head who’ll say anything derogatory about the Cebuanos and the Visayans.

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The prologue lays out the idea and intentions of the book and the FMA Informative would like to quote considering his avowed reverence to his mentor a Cebuano the legendary Antonio Ilustrisimo. I forgot the title of the article, but when it came out on the internet, this paragraph was removed. I told Ned to inform the editor of the Rapid Journal my open disgust and anger of this statement. I am a proud Cebuano, and I’d break anyone’s head who’ll say anything derogatory about the Cebuanos and the Visayans.

Interview with Celestino C. Macachor

The book Cebuano Eskrima: Beyond the Myth – authored by Ned R. Nepangue, M.D. and Celestino C. Macachor is a must have book, if interested or wanting to know about the Filipino martial arts. Basically about Cebuano Eskrima it takes away a lot of fictional stories and brings facts to the table.

The FMA Informative representative met Ned Nepangue in 2008 while in Manila, Philippines and there was just a little conversation about a few things, due to time restraints. Mr. Nepangue was a very busy person researching some new material for the future. However the FMA Informative while visiting the Philippines in 2015 and in Cebu as the representatives’ first stop in the Philippines, was very fortunate to get to meet and talk with Celestino Macachor. It was an honor to finally meet with the co-author author of Cebuano Eskrima: Beyond the Myth.

This time the FMA Informative representative was able to talk and discuss somethings with Mr. Macachor on the subject of the Filipino martial arts about the past, present and future.

The FMA Informative is very appreciative to be able to ask Mr. Macachor about the book he co-authored with Ned Nepangue which was published in 2007. The book is divided into four parts:

Part One – is about Eskrima in general
Part Two – is about Eskrima in Cebu
Part Three – covers some broad technical discussion on Eskrima
Part Four – includes extra notes related to Eskrima

The prologue lays out the idea and intentions of the book and the FMA Informative would like to quote some parts of it to the reader:

“The authors do not intend to present this book just like any other books on Filipino martial arts. This work is a reading material on Filipino culture where FMA is just but a small neglected part. After decades of a “generic” description of Eskrima (a form of FMA), it is now the time to know more details. There is a need now for an in-depth study of the local or regional Eskrima perspectives and practices to appreciate Eskrima deeper.”
Ned Nepangue Points out Some Facts on Kali

We can only make a guess as to the origin of Eskrima/Arnis/Estocada since there are no conclusive written records available in the archives to assist us in our research (that is, if we are really serious about this). Earlier writings did mention in passing, something regarding pre-Hispanic martial arts in the islands. But we should remember this, that the earliest Europeans who visited the islands did not know the native languages, were not well versed on the technicalities of Eskrima, I gave him full credit for that by virtue of his having trained with the best instructors during his heyday like Jose “Jego” Milan. You know very well I’m not a technique guy, I only need to learn two or three strikes and that’s all.

The FMA Informative would like to thank Mr. Macachor for his time and patience in answering the questions that were asked.

Mr. Macachor and Mr. Nepangue have put together a book that yes it has been out since 2007, however the FMA Informative believes that it was not handled correctly for maximum sales by the publisher, and has since it conception in 2011 promoted the sale of this book “Cebuano Eskrima: Beyond the Myth” in every FMA Informative newspaper and any other media that it has had the opportunity to advertise it.

Many books that have come out in the past are not available in today’s market. This book is still available, get it DO NOT make the mistake or the opportunity to have a book that will always be a piece of literary value and a treasure about the Filipino martial arts.

Ned Nepangue

Chapter 4 “The Lost Tribes of Cebuano Eskrima.” How was it decided who would be included in this chapter?

Mr. Macachor: Ned and I agreed on one thing, to highlight only the unknown Eskrimadores in this chapter. With the exception of Bonifacio “Loly” Uy and Jane Melendez, all the rest are already deceased. We were just in the nick of time to talk to these grand old men. A year after the interview, Nitoy Tabotabo, Pedro Domecillo and Julian Goe-Ong passed away.

Chapter 5 “Technicities in Eskrima.” Was this a personal observation, or did you and/or Mr. Nepangue consult various practitioners?

Mr. Macachor: Ned is very well versed on the technicalities of Eskrima, I gave him full credit for that by virtue of his having trained with the best instructors during his heyday like Jose “Jego” Milan. You know very well I’m not a technique guy, I only need to learn two or three strikes and that’s all.

The FMA Informative would like to thank Mr. Macachor for his time and patience in answering the questions that were asked.
The Filipino stick fighting in many ways is really different compared to other stick fighting systems in the region. The Eskrima styles as practiced by many Ilocanos in the far north of the archipelago are basically familiar to the styles found in the south, in the Visayas. There may be differences in some expressions but generally speaking they are the same.

Fact #5: Practically all Eskrima systems/styles are practiced only in the Christianized groups (or those who are under the direct influence of the Spanish conquerors for 333 years), and that no known Eskrima style/system is found among those peoples in the hinterlands of Luzon, among the Lumad and the Muslims in Mindanao.

The Spanish colonized the islands for 333 years, but they were not able to convert the entire population to the Christian faith. There were many ethnic groups left who were not directly influenced by them. Many of these groups are slowly assimilated still retain many of their pre-Hispanic practices. But if the theory is true that Eskrima and the like is something original pre-Hispanic, then at least one of these many tribal groups could show us sampling of a functional systems/styles are practiced only in some expressions but generally speaking they are the same.

Fact #6: A link between Kali and Silat styles is yet to be proven, both are really different in form and substance.

Many creative Eskrimadors want to have this “Moro motif” integrated to their styles. In actuality Eskrima/Arnis has nothing to do with the Muslims groups in the south who have their own very beautiful and lethal martial art of Siau. Many people foolishly attempt to establish link between the two, but until now they could not provide us enough evidence. In books and articles on eskrima they always include stories about jumarnento just to add dramatic effect, but in reality all of these, have nothing to do with Eskrima/Arnis. Many insist that some of these Muslim tribes do practice some form of kali art. But if we inquire what tribe is that, they could not readily give an answer. Some say it is in Sulu, but if we ask further which part of Sulu? Again there is no clear answer. Since the 70s when this claim first appeared, and until now nobody can really give the correct answer. Why? Well, the truth of the matter is, there is no kali in the Moroland. Just a pure fantasy. Is it possible to invent stories and fool the martial arts community? You bet! If you are familiar with the story of the Neolithic they reportedly found in Mindanao called Tasaday, you will easily understand how/why. In eskrima/arbis, emphasis is on weaponry first then unarmed fighting later, but in silat they have the weapons training only later.

Fact #7: About 65% of technical terms used in all Eskrima/Arnis/Estocada developed and propagated by many linguistically diverse ethnic groups are of Spanish origin.

The Spanish language was never totally adapted by the Filipinos unlike those in other former colonies of the North and South America. This was because the colonial authorities in the Philippines did not encourage the natives to learn the language. For three centuries, only the elite and the educated could speak and write the Spanish language. A strange fact is, a great percentage of technical terms used in Eskrima/Arnis/Estocada (and even the supposedly pre-Hispanic kali styles) are in Spanish, the language most Filipinos then (and now) did not speak. This is also the language used by the authorities who outlawed the practice and propagation of this native martial art. If the practitioners at that time were forced to practice in hiding, then why did they not use their own respective languages and dialects instead of using Spanish?

Fact #8: The connection between kali and Indonesian martial art of tjakalele is not yet proven.

Tjakalele is practically just a war dance originated in the Moluccas. It uses spears and shields, the weapons, which are not found in 99% of kali schools. Words like kali and tjakalele may sound familiar and related but this proves anything that both are actually related.

Fact #9: The suggestion that kali is the root word of some words found in different Filipino languages and dialects is not based on linguistics, in fact a study on this claim is yet to be made.

Important pre-Hispanic household words like diwata, Bathala, Datu, ulipon are still understood by many and this same is also true with words associated with the warriors, like bangkaw, baraw, tameng. So what is supposed to be the ancient name for the Filipino martial art? Kali? If it is kali then, why don’t we find this word in dictionaries of the different Filipino languages and dialects? In fact this particular word was just “re-introduced” years ago. Kali is never a traditional name for the native martial art. If one goes to a secluded place in Cebu for example and ask those Eskrima old-timers there if they know what is kali, the will probably say they don’t know. And these people are supposed to know better.

Fact #10: The earliest technical description about Eskrima/Arnis was available only lately.

The very first known book available in public was Yambao’s book in 1957.

Fact #11: Many modalities in Eskrima/Arnis/Estocada like espada y daga are also found in European fencing arts.

Fact #12: The once Spanish colony of Venezuela in far-away South America also have their own form of stick fighting.

The Garrote Larense stick fighting art of Venezuela reminds one of Eskrima. There must be a connection between these two martial arts somewhere and further research is needed.

Fact #13: It is baseless to say that Eskrima or Arnis are just phases of stick fighting.

Important pre-Hispanic household words like diwata, Bathala, Datu, ulipon are still understood by many and this same is also true with words associated with the warriors, like bangkaw, baraw, tameng. So what is supposed to be the ancient name for the Filipino martial art? Kali? If it is kali then, why don’t we find this word in dictionaries of the different Filipino languages and dialects? In fact this particular word was just “re-introduced” years ago. Kali is never a traditional name for the native martial art. If one goes to a secluded place in Cebu for example and ask those Eskrima old-timers there if they know what is kali, the will probably say they don’t know. And these people are supposed to know better.

Fact #14: There is no lack of good blacksmiths and is not the reason why many Escrima/Arnis fighters use sticks now instead of real blades.

Many good Eskrimadors are not found in areas known for their machete making skills. Many panday or sword smiths do not know Eskrima and it is never mentioned in the Philippine history that Filipinos were running out of bolos.

Fact #15: That the theory proposed is actually not corroborated in the works of the experts of the Philippine history, anthropology and sociology.

Intertribal war was a reality especially before the islands became a colony of Spain. When there is war, there are warriors, weapons and military arts. If kali was a military art then history books in high school and college must mention it. I do not remember reading a word kali in our history books when I was still in high school and college, instead in our world history I read words like samurai, katanas etc. Books of anthropology must also provide details about it. It is not mentioned, not because historians are not interested, is simply because there is no sufficient information about it.

So basing on the aforementioned facts, we can only offer logical comments as to the possible origin of the contemporary Filipino martial arts (a bigger portion of which is the Eskrima/Arnis/Estocada/Kali). It is basically a product of Filipino creativity and no doubt whatsoever, it is very Filipino. The bulk of its repertoire was developed during Spanish colonial times, and plausibly it got its inspiration from European fencing concepts and practices. It was greatly developed and refined (and the evolution still continues) only here in the islands of the Philippines.
**School Submission**

The schools listed teach Filipino martial arts, either as the main curriculum or an added curriculum. If you have a school that teaches Filipino martial arts, or you are an instructor that teaches, but does not have a school, list the school or style so individuals who wish to experience, learn and gain knowledge have the opportunity.

Be Professional; keep your contact information current. - [Click Here](#)

**Event Submission**

Submit your event whether - Seminar, Workshop, Training Camp, tournament, or Gathering - [Click Here](#)

**Advertisement Submission**

Advertising in the FMA Informative Website is FREE. An Ad in the FMA Informative can create Business. Your Advertisement for Filipino martial arts forums, blogs etc, can be included in the FMA Informative. Advertisment is for the Filipino Martial Arts and the Philippines.

To submit Forums [Click Here](#). To submit advertisement for products and/or Services [Click Here](#)

**Article Submission**

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

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

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

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

Emailed manuscripts should be typed in Ariel or Times Roman, on programs such as Notepad, Wordpad, Microsoft Word, Word Perfect and can be sent as an attachment. Photo(s) can be sent as a .jpg, .gif, .bmp, or .tiff - to submit material for either the FMA Informative Newspaper or an Issue [Click Here](#)

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