

FMA

Informative

Propagating the Filipino Martial Arts and the Culture of the Philippines

Informative Issue No. 232

2016

Filipino Historical Perspective of the Philippine Martial Art

By Grandmaster Federico T. Lazo



Luzviminda
Arnis Kali
Brotherhood

The Way of Life
Social Gatherings
Personal Temperament
Philosophies
Practical Factors of Life
Misconceptions

Zarzuelas
Influence of European and Spanish Sword Fighting System
Integration in Arnis
Transition of Ames to Arnis
Pre-Hispanic Martial Art
Burden of Proof
Kali's Singular Identity

Conclusion

Grandmaster Federico T. Lazo [1938 - 2010]

Luzviminda is Born

The FMA Informative knew Grandmaster Fred Lazo before he passed away and was honored to do a Special Edition on Grandmaster Lazo for the FMA Digest. Since his passing is son Master Frederick "Ricky" Lazo has taken the reins and continues to promote and promulgate the Luzviminda Arnis Kali Brotherhood.

Master Ricky Lazo contacted the FMA Informative and asked if we would be interested to publish this material "Filipino Historical Perspective of the Philippine Martial Art" which was written when the Rapid Journal was still in operation. The material was unfortunately never published. So the FMA informative feels honored that the Lazo family let us publish this.

Master Frederick "Ricky" Lazo was born in Tampa, Florida, the only son of Grandmaster Federico Lazo.



Ricky's official training began at the age of ten although his actual exposure began in the very beginning of his life. It was impressed upon young Ricky at an early age that he would be responsible for receiving his family's legacy and that much dedication and sacrifice would be required to pave the way for that to happen. The training was unusually rigorous for a child, according to Grandmaster Lazo.

The purity of information and the integrity of training are almost never better than in the case of father to son training, especially when the father is a bona fide Grandmaster. Because the Lazo's family's original intention was strictly to practice their martial arts privately, it was especially important to insure that Ricky's training was complete, otherwise the art would fade away. Since the decision was made to share the family art, both Ricky and his father have completely pooled their resources and focused their efforts together on the L.A.K.B. mission of completely transmitting these arts intact to the new generation of instructors. Master Ricky is instrumental in this process. He remains humble about his own abilities and acknowledges that he will train for the rest of his life, always probing deeper into the endless potential of these arts while seeking greater insight and abilities.

Master Ricky Lazo is the current President and Head Instructor of the Luzviminda Arnis/Kali system.



Luzviminda Arnis/Kali Brotherhood

Master Ricky Lazo Instructor

(813) 849-8146

Email: arnisador1@msn.com

www.lakb.info

Each issue features practitioners of martial arts and other internal arts, other features include historical, theoretical and technical articles; reflections, Filipino martial arts, healing arts, the culture of the Philippines and other related subjects.

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

The ideas and opinions expressed in the FMA Informative online magazine are those of the authors or instructors being interviewed and are not necessarily the views of the publisher, editor or owner of the FMA Informative. The articles are the property of the author's that wrote them and cannot be used without the permission of the author.

The FMA Informative is for the promulgation and promotion of the Filipino martial arts and the Culture of the Philippines. NO issue can be printed and Sold for Monies, without the express permission of the Owner and Publisher of the FMA Informative.



Grandmaster Lazo, Christine and Ricky Lazo

In order to better understand the evolution of Kali, one has to be a practitioner and a part of the Filipino society to understand customs, traditions, along with the prevailing way of life. Historical facts can provide some knowledge while lacking those essential ingredients that provide a truly deep and integrated understanding of the truth that the Philippines is and has been a natural seed bed of its own indigenous martial arts and traditions such as Arnis. The way of life, social gatherings, personal temperament, philosophies, as well as the practical factors of life, have shaped the growth of these ancient and unique arts to a great extent.

The Way of Life

Daily activities, involved young Filipinos in using bolos very early in their lives for tasks such as gathering firewood. Holding the branches and cutting them at different angles laid the foundation and provided familiarity with the bolo. Brushing leaves to get to the trunk of replacement branches developed the use of the free hand. Clearing vegetation to make “Kaingin” (cleared planting fields) to plant corn and other vegetables provided more practice in the skills associated with the use and total familiarity with the bolo ^(#13 pg. 17). Cutting vines and branches for hours at a time forced one to adapt to the technique of stroking before cutting. Most of the time, such jobs lasted from dawn until dusk. All across the Philippines, in sugar, rice and other plantations, these daily tasks developed the natural skills of grabbing, stroking and checking without the person necessarily knowing that he was building a strong foundation of Kali or Arnis.

Social Gatherings

At night, when the moon is full, Arnis practitioners practice the techniques under the moonlight as they have for centuries. After work in the rice fields, people in the north drink wine called “Basi” to make the gathering lively ^(#13 pg. 26) and Arnis becomes part of the fun. Wrestling called “Gabbo” or “Tinniliw” is also practiced to develop skills in the empty hand fighting. This is a usual activity in rural areas that has gone on for uncounted years and even up to the present day, although today it does not prevail in all places.

Personal Temperament

Filipinos are friendly and warm people and their friendship is in both, word and deeds. However, if someone crosses the line, a Filipino becomes a worse enemy, and all involved watches all sides until harmony is restored once again. The nature of Filipinos results in their resorting to the study of Filipino martial arts like Arnis. Indeed, it is this very nature and personality of a unique people that has molded the character of Arnis along with other intimate cultural traits of the Philippines.

It is a well known fact that the majority of Filipinos prefer to use a blade in actual fights instead of the empty hand. This is one reason why Filipinos start their training with the weapon and end up training the empty hand ^(#6 pgs. 103 & 154).

Philosophies

It is the nature of Filipinos to be in harmony with one another. It even proved to be true when they were on the side of the conquistadors. Filipino loyal troops which comprised the majority of Spain’s fighting forces in the Philippines, tried to keep Spain in power ^(#1, #2 & #3). Filipinos are subjective people ^(#6). They harmonize with

References:

1. Baet, Abundio. “Is Arnis de Mano Dead in the Philippines.” *Inside Kung-Fu May 1997*: 92. Print.
2. Balagtas, Francisco. *Florante at Laura*. Quezon City: ANI and Educational Trading Center, 1982. Print.
3. Cato, Robert. *Moro Swords*. Singapore: Graham Brash (Pte). Ltd., 1996. Print.
6. Mercado Leonardo. *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*. Philippines: Divine Word Publishing, 1974. Print.
13. Zaide, Gregorio. *Philippine History: Development of Our Nation*. Manila, Philippines: Bookman Inc., 1961. Print.

everything that they do and encounter. Therefore, their Arnis and themselves are naturally, one and the same. They don’t separate themselves with what they do and who they are. If their Arnis is bad, then they are bad. And so, the Filipino fighter is not only one with his blade, but with everything surrounding him in his life. They are one and the same. Understanding this, one can understand and account for the many death matches occurring throughout history. While Filipinos are subjective in nature, Westerners tend to be more objective in their outlook. They separate themselves from what they do. If what they do is bad, they just say that it can be better the next time. But, it is the very subjective nature of the Filipino character that accounts for the continuing evolution of Amis, in a major way. The art of Kali or Arnis can, then, be considered in many ways and from a Filipino’s living/subjective perspective, to be actually alive!

Practical Factors of Life

In conjunction with the foregoing factors, another major influence upon the development and progress of Arnis, especially in the past were the day to day practical factors of life. War made the indigenous people of the islands realize what worked and what did not ^(#13 Pg.30). A dead man failed in his techniques while a victorious one returned alive to tell the tale of his techniques. Today, government tourism programs help in developing Filipino martial arts such as Kali or Arnis. It is now being widely exported all over the world. With the exportation of the art, misconceptions and misunderstandings relating to many aspects of Arnis or Kali have arisen. And, like a bad rumor, these perpetuated themselves through ignorance, cultural misunderstanding, and the self-interest and self-importance which human nature doesn’t always realize as a driving force on the road to some individuals martial art glory. In the interest of the sincere student of Amis or Kali as well as the Filipino people and culture, it seems prudent and wise to set the record straight on some important issues.

Misconceptions

Zarzuelas

Published books and articles in the past have stated that the well known “Zarzuelas” or stage plays, enabled Filipinos to practice Arnis secretly before open Spanish eyes ^(#1 & #5). This is a misconception. Upon brief scrutiny, this idea might seem possible. However, upon close examination the truth becomes apparent. Performers or “Zarzuela” were people loyal to the Spanish crown. Kali techniques used in the fight scenes were well known to the Spaniards but they were not prohibited by any means because it was necessary for their entertainment and therefore, tolerated. With the Filipino loyal troops serving as eyes and ears of the Spaniards, there was no way that Spanish officials were oblivious to what was happening. When the fight scenes were performed without objections from the Spaniards that it was in any way in violation of a decree banning Arnis, spectators thought that performers were practicing Kali without their (the Spaniards) knowledge. Of course, all along the Spaniards knew it but they didn’t care because the “Zarzuelistas” were loyal to the throne of Spain, spoke Spanish and therefore considered part of the better class level of society. The “Zarzuela” proved the truth that the ban was only for the lay people or masses whose loyalty was questionable.

Filipino loyal troops were also allowed to practice Kali since they were responsible for crushing any uprisings and rebellions that could and did occur ^(#1, #2 & #3). The ban was enforced only to weaken the Kali of people

References:

1. Baet, Abundio. “Is Arnis de Mano Dead in the Philippines.” *Inside Kung-Fu May 1997*: 92. Print.
2. Balagtas, Francisco. *Florante at Laura*. Quezon City: ANI and Educational Trading Center, 1982. Print.
3. Cato, Robert. *Moro Swords*. Singapore: Graham Brash (Pte). Ltd., 1996. Print.
5. Foon, George and Inosanto, Dan. *The Filipino Martial Arts*. Los Angeles: Know How Publishing Company, 1980. Print.
13. Zaide, Gregorio. *Philippine History: Development of Our Nation*. Manila, Philippines: Bookman Inc., 1961. Print.

who did not bow to the Spanish crown. Kali, therefore, did not degenerate because loyal troops practiced it in its pure form.

Influence of European and Spanish Sword Fighting System

The belief that classical Arnis is strongly influenced by European fencing is another highly erroneous misconception.^(#11) This pronouncement by opinionated authors is typical of one viewing the art from the ‘outside’ so to speak. Or worse, away from any offense, it appears as the machinations of those who deliberately alter the truth to promote selfish objectives.

The opinion that Kali or classical Arnis is strongly influenced by Spanish sword fighting systems like fencing is false.^(#11) One reason for this error could be that the Spanish terminology prevalent in the Filipino languages can mislead people in their efforts to reconcile terms like “Arnis” with their associated Spanish references. The terminologies are, in actuality, unrelated to any Spanish or European fencing arts. They are, instead, literal or direct translations of pre-Hispanic indigenous Filipino languages such as Tagalog, Visayan, Ilocano, or Pangasinan.

For example, the terms “Eskrima”, “Arnis” or “Kali” are a translation of the Filipino name of “Panandata”. “Espada y Daga” is a translation of “Tabak at Balaraw” or Tabak at Panaksak”. “Doble Baston” is a translation of “Sinawali” or “Dalawahang Tungkod” or “Pamalo”. “Solo Baston” is a translation of “Isahang Tungkod” or “Isahang Pamalo”. Translation of “Espada y Daga to the Ilocano language is “Buneng ken Pangduyok”. “Doble Baston” is “Sagdudua a Pang’or”. “Solo Baston” is “Sagaysa a Pangor”. “Mano a Mano” is “Ima ken Ima”. These terminologies then, in actuality are translations from the Filipino languages. It would be senseless to research the translations’ origins and then try and relate the results to the underlying and original Filipino martial traditions. The arts and their respective Filipino names immensely predated the Spanish translations such as Eskrima or Arnis. Clearly any attempt to relate these translations as a basis for conclusions linking European arts such as fencing with the ancient warrior arts of the Philippines is, at best, an error and at worst, a total fabrication of history and hopefully is not done in order to achieve a purpose. Spanish fencing is a world of its own and so is Arnis.

The Filipinos are language oriented people, evidenced by so many existing dialects. Many people speak a minimum of two languages or dialects.^(#13 Pg.33) Speaking the Spanish language during the Spanish era was a status symbol. Because of Spanish propaganda anything Spanish was considered ‘high class’. People speaking Spanish were classified as belonging to the upper strata of society. This sort of brainwashing turned many Filipinos towards a colonial mentality. Filipinos were also forced to adopt Spanish names just like they were forced to learn in the Spanish language from Spanish textbooks. These reasons contributed greatly to the adoption and prevalence of Arnis/Spanish terminologies.

The Spanish sovereignty existed for many centuries only because Filipinos chose to maintain its power over the islands.^(#13 Ch.10, pg.135) Many uprisings were suppressed by Filipinos themselves.^(#1 & #2) For example, Tagalog recruits would suppress an Ilocano uprising or vice-versa. A Visayan uprising might either be suppressed by Ilocanos or Tagalogs. This is the reason why various groups of Filipinos in the past hated each other. Clearly it was a successful strategy by the Spaniards of ‘divide and conquer’ policies. The Spanish troops in the Philippines were primarily Filipinos. Spaniards were, by far, outnumbered and they feared the possibility of Filipino loyal troops turning against them.^(#13 pg. 136)

The prohibition of the practice of Kali by the Spaniards did not really cause a decline in the quality of Kali. This effect was only intended on the people who the Spaniards believed to have doubtful allegiance to the crown. Nevertheless, the people still practiced in secrecy in the heart of the jungle, sugar cane fields and other

References:

1. Baet, Abundio. “Is Arnis de Mano Dead in the Philippines.” *Inside Kung-Fu May 1997: 92. Print.*
2. Balagtas, Francisco. *Florante at Laura. Quezon City: ANI and Educational Trading Center, 1982. Print.*
11. Wiley, Mark. *Filipino Martial Arts: Cabales Serrada Escrima. Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle, 1994. Print.*
13. Zaide, Gregorio. *Philippine History: Development of Our Nation. Manila, Philippines: Bookman Inc., 1961. Print.*

isolated places preserving their art. The Filipino loyal troops were not prohibited from the practice of the pure form of Kali because, as has been stated, they were the guardians of the throne, responsible for maintaining Spanish sovereignty, and their Kali was therefore needed to serve the crown in case of rebellion or uprising.^(# 1, #2 & #3) In this way the art of Kali was preserved unblemished within the loyal troops and was not integrated with any other arts.

The evolution of classical Arnis or Eskrima into double stick, long and short stick and single stick did not come from the integration of Spanish fencing arts. Contrary to this belief, the evolution proceeded from the warriors’ sword and shield art. This evolution is a riddle of Kali that can be solved by practicing the totality of the art to a degree of proficiency that leads to understanding. This kind of understanding does not come if only a segment of the art is practiced like Espada y Daga. The experience will be felt only by practicing the complete art. When the expertise of the ancient warriors on the sword and shield reached its height, they realized that the shield, typically held in the left hand, could be replaced with a sword. The only thing needed was to transfer the proficiency of the right hand to the left hand while retaining the shield’s purpose of checking an opponent’s sword, for creating openings and deterring speed. This started the development of the Sinawali or double sword system. When Sinawali was developed and tested, the weakness of this system lay in close range fighting. Long swords do not have the stabbing or cutting efficiency in short range combat, although they are very effective if the proper range and distance are constantly maintained. To correct the weakness of the double sword style, the ancient warriors replaced one sword with a dagger. This brought about the practice of sword and dagger or Espada y Daga. In the Muslim area of Mindanao, in the absence of a dagger, the scabbard is used^(#3 pg.13)... However, the ancient warriors found out that disarming was more effective if they could grab the hand. Through the process of practice they discovered that they could execute take downs, locks, and other disabling techniques within the framework of their system with one hand free from any weapon whatsoever. This progression from sword and shield to sword and sword, to sword and dagger, ending with single sword and active hand, is the authentic evolution of Kali which has remained pure from Spanish and other influences, even up to the present day. Thanks to the stubbornness of the Filipinos, including the loyal troops that handed down the art to their own blood lines, the martial arts unique to the Philippines was preserved. In this way Kali, Arnis, and Eskrima were prevented from degenerating into inferior and incomplete systems through the diluting effects of untested ‘and foreign arts, and from being turned into merely a sport with no combat value. Arnis, if it had, for example, integrated with an art like Spanish fencing, could not have been considered to have evolved in its nature as an art. Instead, with a corrupting influence, the art would have de-evolved and backslid into degeneration.

Integration in Arnis

The claim that European educated Filipinos integrated Spanish fencing systems into Arnis does not have any validity either.^(#11) Educated Filipinos during the Spanish time of occupation, occupied themselves with peaceful campaigns for reform. They were busy demanding equality from the Spaniards, to become a province of Spain, for representation in the Spanish Courts, for secularization of parishes, and for individual liberties for Filipinos.^(#13 Pg.233)

Filipinos who learned fencing in school took it only for academic purposes and never integrated it with Arnis. Filipinos knew that if they integrated fencing, it would weaken the combat quality of Arnis. Logically, I don’t think that the Spaniards were in their right mind, if there was any desire on their part to influence a martial art they wanted to destroy. Neither were the Filipinos insane enough, to accept any influence from an enemy who wanted to push their martial art into extinction.

References:

1. Baet, Abundio. “Is Arnis de Mano Dead in the Philippines.” *Inside Kung-Fu May 1997: 92. Print.*
2. Balagtas, Francisco. *Florante at Laura. Quezon City: ANI and Educational Trading Center, 1982. Print.*
3. Cato, Robert. *Moro Swords. Singapore: Graham Brash (Pte). Ltd., 1996. Print.*
11. Wiley, Mark. *Filipino Martial Arts: Cabales Serrada Escrima. Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle, 1994. Print.*
13. Zaide, Gregorio. *Philippine History: Development of Our Nation. Manila, Philippines: Bookman Inc., 1961. Print.*

When Dr. Jose Rizal was teaching student's self-defense while exiled in Dapitan, he was teaching Arnis instead of Spanish fencing.^(#4 Pg.21 PFP) Yet, he took fencing lessons in Ateneo de Manila. He was highly educated in Europe and is a shining example that integration of Spanish fencing had no place in the heart of a Filipino.

The Filipinos take pride in their Kali. The defeat of Magellan in the island of Mactan proved the superiority of the art over Spanish fencing systems.^(#13 Pg.68) The Filipinos would have been fools to have integrated a weaker system into their own art, not to mention the art of an enemy. That would have been an insult to their ancient heritage and to the ancient warriors who developed their art in the field of battle. Similarly, it would have been an insult to the Grandmasters who spent lifetimes perfecting their arts. To say that Spanish fencing systems were integrated into classical Arnis is to shift the honor, identity and culture to the white Spaniards who once called the Filipinos Indios. If this notion was established as part of the history of Arnis, then Filipinos would be merely relegated to the position of imitators who lacked the vision, intelligence and spirit to develop a fighting art and culture of their own; Arnis would then be a European/Caucasian's martial art. Filipino's would have then lost their very own art. The notion, when contemplated logically, is absurd! One should not attempt this sort of manipulation either through ignorance or intent. Respect for the art, handed down generation after generation is paramount to anyone sincerely seeking to understand and acquire its essence.

I was fortunate to have been tutored by the legendary Felicisimo Dizon. Based on what I saw in his art, it embodied the character of the ancient art of Kali. If the source of his art was a blind princess or hermit located in the middle of nowhere, outside influences on his art would be impossible. Yet Serrada Eskrima, a direct descendant of Dizon's de Cuerda's style claimed to be largely influenced by Spanish fencing, as expressed by Mark Wiley in his book entitled "Filipino Martial Arts."^(#11 Pg. 23) With all due respect, I don't believe that the famous founder of the Serrada system would admit that his art is an adulterated Filipino fighting art. Earned respect from many death matches stand as a witness to this, not to mention his great pride in his culture and art and the respect he commanded. A more plausible explanation would be that Serrada was a victim of lack of proper scrutiny. The Serrada system is an extension of a legend to a great teacher. It should be protected and not degraded. The numerous death matches of the great Grandmaster Cabales and the legendary Dizon, show that they are two links of a long and venerable chain of Kali brought by the Bornean Datus who once settled in the historic Panay Island. Dizon's many legendary fight victories showed the refinement of his art like that of classical Kali. It is an insult to his heritage to credit the Spaniards even a little bit with any influence on his art. That is the same as bringing back memories of oppression, tyranny, and discrimination to the Filipino people once called Indios. Arnis is not a stolen Filipino heritage gleaned from some other Caucasian fighting art. No, Arnis, Kali and Eskrima are entirely Filipino in nature and spirit.

The legend of de Cuerda's has passed away and nobody can speak for him. Out of respect I make this effort to speak for him. Out of respect I made the effort to present a constructive argument and wish to be understood in this light. My wish, always, is to stay in harmony with the martial art world around me.

I can still remember Dizon making a salutation and doing a fighting form while uttering praise for his idols, Ruben Villasanta and Santiago Toledo. These were two respected Filipino Grandchampions who achieved fame in the world of Arnis.

Transition of Ames to Arnis

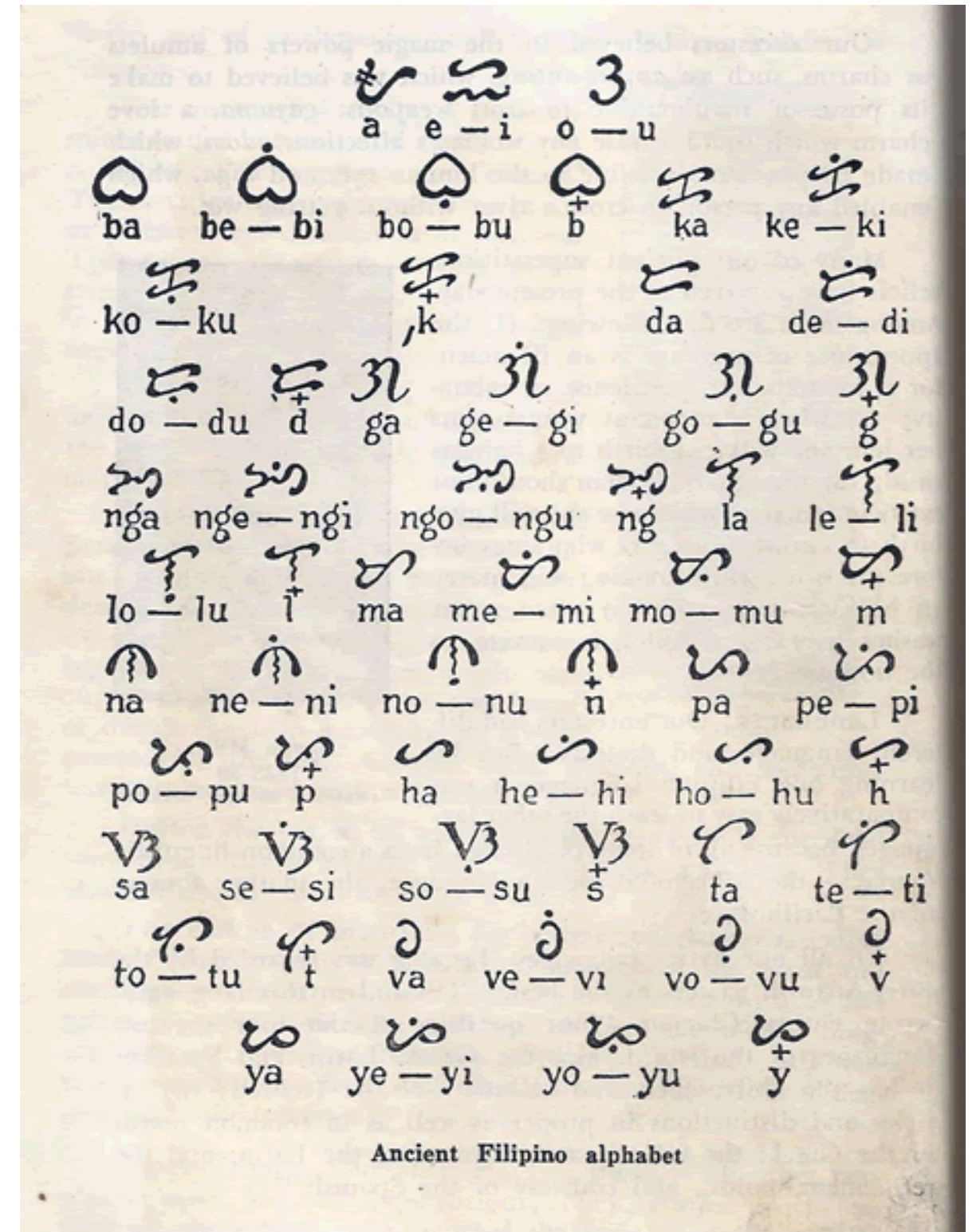
Some authors, like Baet and Remy Presas, as expressed in his book entitled "Modern Arnis", (1983) believe that the word 'Ames', was corrupted into the word 'Arnis'. Apparently, they believe, the word changed and was corrupted through ignorance.^(#1 Pg. 92, 1K) On the contrary, it changed because of the literacy of the Filipinos.

References:

1. Baet, Abundio. "Is Arnis de Mano Dead in the Philippines." *Inside Kung-Fu* May 1997: 92. Print.
4. Datoc, Serapio. "Rizal the Teacher." *Philippine Free Press* 20 June 1931: 21. Print.
11. Wiley, Mark. *Filipino Martial Arts: Cabales Serrada Eskrima*. Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle, 1994. Print.
13. Zaide, Gregorio. *Philippine History: Development of Our Nation*. Manila, Philippines: Bookman Inc., 1961. Print.

Vowels in the ancient alphabet can be pronounced both ways if there is a dot over or under them.^(#13 Pg.34) If a word, for example 'woman' is written in the ancient alphabet, it is pronounced either of two ways, "Babae", or "Babai". The word "Arnis", would be pronounced as follows: Armour = "Ames" (malumay), or "Amis" (maragsa). Filipinos prefer strong sounding words (maragsa) over weak sounding ones (malumay).

Without resorting to the educational background of pre-Hispanic Filipinos, it can only be concluded that the change from "Ames" to "Arnis", is a product of an ignorant mind since the preferred term has long been "Arnis" (Maragsa), the stronger term.



References:

13. Zaide, Gregorio. *Philippine History: Development of Our Nation*. Manila, Philippines: Bookman Inc., 1961. Print.

Pre-Hispanic Martial Art

Mark Wiley's book entitled "Filipino Martial Culture" (1997) denied the pre-Hispanic status of the Filipino martial art known as Kali. He reasons that there is no historical, anthropological or literary evidence to support the contention that an art by this name existed during or prior to the sixteenth century. Yet, he should know that the evidences he wanted were destroyed by the Spaniards. He invalidated the claim that Kali was derived from the name of the Kalis sword. He considered Mr. Placido Yambao's finding of the original name of the Filipino martial art "Kali" as mere speculation. Kali which is derived from the word Kalis is used as a root word to express swordsmanship. The words are Kalirongan for Pangasinan, Kaliradman for the Visayan and Pagkalikali to the Ibanags. From those words Mr. Yambao uncovered the name of the pre-Hispanic martial art named "Kali" (Yambao, 1957).

Besides what Mr. Yambao discovered, in the Ilocano dialect, Kali means to stab with a weapon or to dig. When an Ilocano says, "Kaliem to bahrang na," he means "Stab him on the side of the body". The "em" attached to the Kali root word denotes an imperative mood. Mr. Yambao's finding agrees with the Kali meaning in Ilocano as an art of using weapon.

Being born with the Filipino language, Mr. Yambao knew the structure of the national language (Tagalog) which is similar to the major dialects of the Philippines. Basing on Mr. Yambao's book he showed a great understanding of his language and a profound knowledge of Balarila (grammar). Knowing the word constructions of the Filipino national language he uncovered the long unused word "Kali", buried with the passage of time into oblivion due to Spanish effort to ban the practice of the art.

Decrees issued during the Spanish time were very strict on the people to whom it was intended. Any verbal contradictions or mentioning of the thing prohibited could make someone serve time in the dungeon of Fort Santiago. This is the reason why Kaliradman, Kalirongan, and Pagkalikali survived only in remote areas.

When Mr. Yambao found the word Kalis in the book by Francisco Balagtas, it strengthened his findings which led him to write the book "Karunungan sa Larong Arnis" (Yambao, 1957).

Though the validity of Mr. Yambao's findings might be questioned regardless, he was right in his approach in which he could have utilized in-depth scrutiny by looking into the ancient Filipino alphabet. If he had only referred the word Kalis as used by the great Filipino poet Francisco Balagtas to the ancient alphabet, he would have uncovered a more enlightening and supporting fact that cannot be disputed. The old alphabet of the Filipinos, excepting the Zambals, does not have the letter "R".^(#10 1929) This missing letter is substituted by a letter "L" along with the substitution of the letter "C" for "S." If we take the word "Gracia" as an illustrative example, this word should be written in the following way.^(#10)

Word	Substitution	Phonetic
Gracia (Grace)	Galasia	G -RA -CI -A GA -LA -SI -A

Similarly, the word Kris should be written as follows:

Word	Substitution	Phonetic
Kris (Sword)	Kalis	K -RI -S KA -LI -S

As can be seen, the ancient alphabet of the Filipinos is the literary evidence that Kali existed during the pre-Hispanic time. The Kris which is always the weapon held in high esteem by the Muslim people, is the origin of the words Kalis and Kali. Swordsmanship using the deadly sword Kris is Kali, which is equivalent to the word "Panandata". Evidently, because of the Kris, Kali is always referred to the brave Muslims of the South.

Francisco Balagtas, in his book entitled "Florante at Laura", used the word Kalis as part of his poetic

References:

10. Villamor, Ignacio. *The Ancient Filipino Writing*. Manila: Isla Filipina, 1922. Print.

vocabulary.^(#2) Kali then, together with all supporting evidence can be concluded to be as old as when the word entered the Tagalog language.

Since it originated from the word Kris as proven by the ancient alphabet translation, it can also be claimed to be as old as when the weapon Kris was introduced in the Philippines. The Kris sword existed before the Spanish time and so did the ancient alphabet (Lahing Pilipino Publishing, Inc., 1977). The Kris therefore is as old as the art of Kali to which it is purposely intended.

Based on the above facts, Kali cannot be denied as being a pre-Hispanic art. The Filipino alphabet invalidated the notion of the pre-Hispanic non-existence of Kali. The Filipino martial art cannot be narrowed down within the scope of the Spanish era, an error which would have erroneously strengthened the claim of Mr. Wiley (1994) that Eskrima is influenced by the European and Spanish sword fighting system.

Scholarly reading of all available historical facts alone is not the right approach to uncover the mystery of Kali. Analytical reconstruction of available information is the only recourse coupled with the gift of common sense along with in-depth study of the Filipino art.

Burden of Proof

The Muslims were not conquered by the Spaniards and also maintained the purity of their fighting arts free from the blemish of Spanish influences.



This picture appeared in Robert Cato's book, "Moro Swords" (1996) and show two fighters sparring with 'live' blades as well as utilizing the scabbard for checking as in the "Daga" (dagger) of classical Eskrima. Here then is an example of the true evolution of the "Espada y Daga" from the double sword or "Sinawali". To a "Mananandata" or swordsman, who has practiced Kali or Arnis, evolving his art from "Sinawali" to Solo "Baston" or single stick, this picture plainly demonstrates the transition of "Espada y Daga" evolving from

"Sinawali". Clearly, this disproves the often fabricated "historical" pronouncement that classical Filipino martial arts, evolved from Spanish fencing systems.

A couple of pictures of Dr. Jose Rizal appeared in 'Filipinas' (June 1997) magazine showing him in full fencing attire and in the company of contemporary propagandists in Spain.

Dr. Jose Rizal is a Filipino national hero who was highly educated in Europe and considered to be the pride of Malay race. He was a practitioner of classical sword and dagger Arnis as well as Spanish fencing. When he was exiled in Dapitan he was teaching his students Arnis instead of Spanish fencing. This can be verified in an article written by Serapio Datoc in the Philippine Free Press entitled "Rizal the Teacher" dated June 20, 1931, Page 21. Further information can be read in a book entitled "Jose Rizal His Exile" by Jose Ma. Hernandez, Esteban A. de Ocampo and Zosimo C. Ella, Pg. 22 copyright 1958.

When Dr. Jose Rizal was in Spain, he was active in the propaganda movement



Dr. Jose Rizal

References:

- Balagtas, Francisco. *Florante at Laura*. Quezon City: ANI and Educational Trading Center, 1982. Print.
- Zaide, Gregorio. *Philippine History: Development of Our Nation*. Manila, Philippines: Bookman Inc., 1961. Print.

demanding reforms. With him many educated Filipinos occupied themselves in asking for changes in the Philippines under Spanish rule. (#13 pg.233)

It is evident at this point that nationalization and Filipino identity was highly valued. Arnis which is a part of Filipino identity was not allowed by educated Filipinos to integrate with Spanish Fencing judging from the existing conditions during that time.

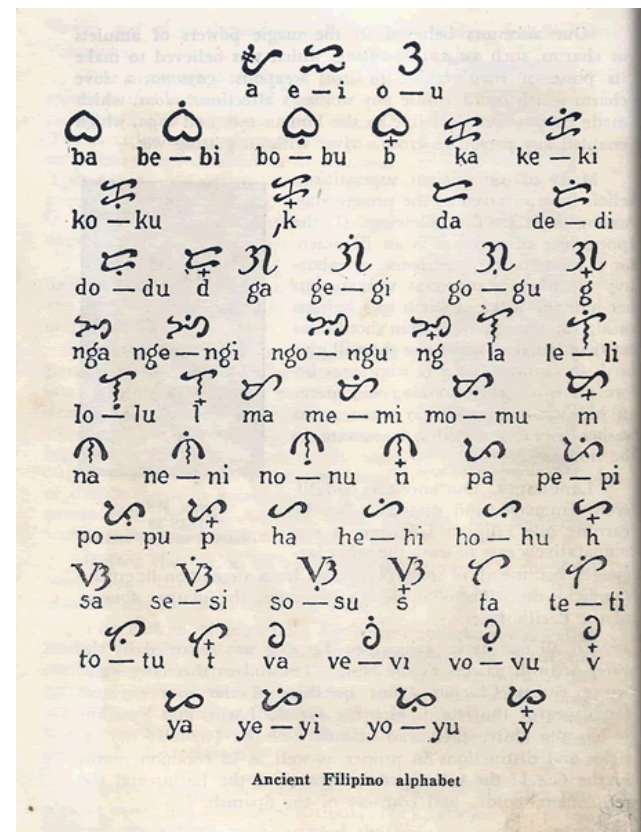
The book of Ignacio Villamor entitled “The Ancient Filipino Writing” (1922) mentioned that the Visayan alphabet which is similar to the Tagalog, was studied comparatively to the table of alphabets of Toba, Bugui, Asoca, Borneo and Java.

The findings of missionary scholars after critically comparing the Philippine alphabets with the others, pointed to the Asoca alphabet as its direct origin. The Asoca is the oldest Indian alphabet and it was used in the edicts of King Asoca 500 B.C. according to K.J. Holl. (#10)

In the book of Dr. Morga “Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas” (#8 pg. 291, note 2) he summarized the opinions of authors during his time. Dr. Jose Rizal concluded that the Filipino alphabet was written horizontally and an ancient writer named Yambouolo had seen this writing centuries before the coming of Christ.



Dr. Jose Rizal, Marcelo H. Del Pilar and Mariano Ponce



The ancient alphabet therefore, beyond reasonable doubt, is a literary pre-Hispanic origin. Kalis which is translated from Kris, and Kali, altogether evolved from the ancient Filipino alphabet and should be considered just as ancient.

Kali's Singular Identity

Finally, it is essential that the original Filipino personality and ideas that produced what is called Kali, Arnis or Eskrima, be understood and preserved.

Kali was created via the inner identity of the Filipino over perhaps, thousands of years as well as through each and every individual Filipino's individual subjective personality. The art has evolved over the centuries being exported in the fairly recent past to other portion of an eager world. There has also remained an intense desire by those who have handed down Kali's legacy, to preserve its secret, techniques and inner identity and spirit.

During relatively recent times, the influence of various factors have impacted on the way students view Kali. Namely as several distinct arts rather than one unique art which has its original roots in the Filipino mind.

The historical pages of Filipino martial art books are mostly abridged. Most of those printed in the Philippines and abroad in recent decades are abridged to a great extent. Histories are generally abridged

References:

8. Morga, Antonio. *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*. Madrid: Libreria General de Victoriano Suarez, 1909. Print.
10. Villamor, Ignacio. *The Ancient Filipino Writing*. Manila: Isla Filipina, 1922. Print.

because Philippine history is substantially taught in academic settings where historical facts are stressed. On the other hand, books written primarily as martial arts books only briefly, if at all, cover historical facts which are secondary to the initial acquisition of techniques and skills. To some extent then one area, history, was separated from another equally old area, Kali. Authors continued to slowly distort and misrepresent adding controversial facts to books and magazines adding to controversies of written accounts.

For the Filipino mind, understanding war is based on knowing something such as a martial art or warfare as one singular thing. Divisible parts are interacting components of the entirety as a whole. Occidental thinking on the other hand tends to separate an area of study into what it sees as its component parts. This factor probably has significantly added to the tendency of many people today, especially in the West, to see Kali or Arnis as consisting of several separate arts or styles. This tendency to dissect and analyze has sometimes reached levels of near absurdity with arts being labeled by such things as “technical characteristics”, as highly ‘western’ way of thinking. It is important then for the serious student to remember the importance of the original personality and systems of learning, if he or she wishes to fully understand the art.

Mr. Yambao as well as Mr. Dan Inosanto correctly classified the Filipino martial system as a single art. Wiley (1997) strongly rejected this notion, reasoning several system based on technical characteristics of the physical movements. Though Mr. Wiley and other writers may tend to divide several arts or systems, the fact remains that there is basically and primarily one Filipino martial art. Additionally, the many dialects of the Philippines have their own unique way of naming this single art. Again another factor which could have contribute to the confusion of those coming from a Western perspective. I agree then with Mr. Yambao and Mr. Inosanto that there is one single art because theirs follow the classification based on the original essential elements of Filipino philosophy (#6 Mercado 1974). To better understand this one must understand the Filipino mind and his art as inseparable.

The Filipino martial art contrary to all other Asian martial arts, starts with the weapons and ends with the empty hand. The empty hand is contained within the principals of the original weapon based art. Mr. Remy Presas defines it as “*An art within an art*”. Further, techniques such as attacks follow universal angles and no matter how they are executed or interpreted they all fall on Kali's or Arnis inherent principles of hand relationships.

Books written by western minds can distort important truths and principles of an art originally created by a highly ingenious Eastern people over many lifetimes. This is a disservice to the art in that it weakens and obscures important facets essential to real understandings and mastery.

Conclusion

The Reverend Father Mercado wrote; “*Interpretations of facts can vary, for they are facets of reality which is much vaster and unfathomable. Moreover, values and biases can color judgements, just as the facts of history are always presented from the historians perspectives and not a few histories of the same event have identical interpretations*” (#6 Mercado, 1974).

What Father Mercado said was indeed true. Historical perspective, as reported has been plagued by lack of authentic information, ignorance, and distortion.

In order to fully understand the art of Kali or Arnis, the way of life of it originators, including social gatherings and temperament needs to be comprehended. The philosophy and day to day factors of life were, then essential to the arts evolution.

Misconceptions about Kali such as the influence of invading cultures can appear, especially if historical accounts take a prejudiced attitude. Though outside cultures as well as various indigenous personalities impacted on Filipino history, they did not have nearly the degree of influence reported by some authors.

Filipinos are a highly creative and proud people whose art is uniquely their own, a product of centuries of evolution. Despite the influence of invaders and academic saboteurs, they have preserved their arts name,

References:

6. Mercado Leonardo. *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*. Philippines: Divine Word Publishing, 1974. Print.

dignity and integrity as is evidenced by its links to ancient Filipino scripts and languages existing long before the arrival of the Spaniards.

I hope that the presentation of the foregoing historical facts combined with my own accounts from my life as a Filipino Arnisador helps to bridge the gap between Kali's true heart and the rest of the world.

Grandmaster Federico T. Lazo

[1938 - 2010]

Grandmaster Lazo was born March 4, 1938 in the barrio of Ananao, Tayum, Abra, Philippines. He was the son of proud parents Paulino Millare Lazo and Rosalia Tamo along with two brothers and a sister. The beginning of Grandmaster Lazo's life was destined to be filled with tragedy. After suffering the loss of his two brothers in WWII, young Federico would also endure the devastating loss of his mother at the tender age of seven. Federico's grieving father, confronted by the absolute impossibility of laboring in the fields all day and raising his family by himself, was forced to make the difficult decision of moving his children to Manila to be raised by their aunt.

Life in Manila provided a wealth of new experiences and opportunities for young Federico. He remained in Manila to adulthood and received the bulk of his academic education there. He majored in accounting while enrolled in the University of the East, located in Manila, and earned his Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. Afterward he landed a job working as an accountant for the S.V.D. or "Societas Verbo Divinos" (Society of the Divine Word).



Paulino Lazo

Throughout this entire period, Paulino, always the dedicated father would regularly visit his children after making the long trek from his hometown of Ananao, Tayum, Abra. When the work in the fields was slow, Paulino would stay for months while working at his sister's candle factory. These times spent together by this father and son duo would form the basis of what would later become martial arts history.

Grandmaster Lazo was nine years old when he first approached his father and asked him to teach him Arnis. Paulino flatly refused. He knew full well the dangers that accompanied the life of the Arnisador and he was certainly aware of his son's fiery temper.

In Fred's father's eyes this was a recipe for disaster. Out of respect for his father's decision he did

not ask again, but he continued to hope his father would someday change his mind. As fate would have it, at the age of twelve Federico narrowly escaped a vicious beating, or perhaps worse, by a group of local teen-age thugs. His father realized instinctively that his son was spared that time but the next time might have been a different story. Paulino simply could not bear the thought of losing another son. So, after much initial hesitation, he was compelled to begin teaching his son the art of Arnis at long last. Thus began Grandmaster Lazo's journey through the world of the Arnisador. Along his ascent he would experience many training sessions accompanied by sore muscles, bruised hands, splits lips and the heart felt satisfaction of knowing that he was finally on the path to mastery.

Grandmaster Lazo's early training as an Arnisador was filled by many colorful experiences and fascinating characters, many of who were expert martial artists. Their common love and appreciation for their arts led so many of these experts and even masters to share their knowledge with the hungry young student whose intense devotion to training was plain for all to see. Beginning with his father he learned the Ilocano art of stick fighting called "Kabarogan," which is also known by its older classical name of "Didya". Kabarogan or Didya is noted for its long-range techniques and devastating striking power. His next teacher was actually the legendary Felicisimo Dizon. Master Dizon was feared for his close range De cuerdes style, and rightly so. Grandmaster Lazo trained with him as a



youth, when Master Dizon would come to the house in order to treat an illness that his aunt was experiencing. Years later the training with Master Dizon would resume, and during this period it was considerably more intense due to Grandmaster Lazo's more advanced skills that had been accumulated over time. They trained together right up until Master Dizon's death. Afterward Grandmaster Lazo became better acquainted with Master Dizon's son, Boy Dizon, who was an accomplished Arnisador in his own right. These two enjoyed a lengthy relationship as friends and sparring partners.



Mr. Luis Cruz

Another of his teachers would be Mr. Luis Cruz from which he learned Single stick and Tabak at Balaraw or Espada y Daga using the Sinawali movement as foundation of the art. Mr Luis Cruz was with the Tabak Ni Bonifacio group, organized by Grandmaster Placido Yambao. Grandmaster Yambao was one time an All-Philippines champion and the teacher of the teacher of Mr. Cruz. Grandmaster Yambao's superior sword and dagger techniques are documented in the rare book he wrote titled "Mga Karunungan Sa Larong Arnis" (Classic Arnis), as well as the book (with the help of Mr. Buenaventura Mirafuente) entitled, "Karunungan Sa Larong Arnis

Luzviminda is Born

In 1975 Grandmaster Lazo immigrated to the United States and chose to make his home in Tampa, Florida. Upon his arrival he began to set about the work of perfecting his personal combat system. The arrival of his two children, Ricky and Christine, meant that there would now be at least two successors who would receive his personal system, refined over years of research and experimentation.

Grandmaster Lazo trained in almost complete seclusion during this period. He kept his Luzviminda combat system a closely guarded secret, mainly intending only to pass it on to his two children. Very few individuals had the opportunity to train in the Luzviminda combat system during this time. Grandmaster Lazo was persuaded to make only a handful of seminar appearances and only consented to personally instruct an absolute minimum number of people.

Grandmaster Lazo's Luzviminda Arnis Kali combat system is composed of Arnis styles spanning the entire Philippine Archipelago. The three main islands are named Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao and in honor of these islands Grandmaster Lazo named his art, Luzviminda Arnis Kali. Never one to brag, even Grandmaster Lazo is forced to admit that there is something truly special about his art, especially in regards to the strides that the Luzviminda system had made in Sinawali. This particular brand of Sinawali is so unusual that the likes of it have never been seen before. According to Grandmaster Lazo its evolution represents, "A feat even the Masters of old did not attempt."

(Knowledge in the Art of Arnis)" which documents his Sinawali techniques. Other great Arnisadors would follow in turn.

They would include Mateo Estilloso, a man of venerable age who was highly proficient in "Tabak at Balaraw" also known as "Espada y Daga" (sword and dagger). He taught his art at Grandmaster Ernesto Presas's training camp, which was known throughout the entire archipelago.



Mateo Estilloso

Grandmaster Lazo credits Nicolas Ignacio as being his single biggest influence. He was a career soldier by trade who served on military assignments spanning the far corners of the entire country. His skill as an Arnisador was legendary. Master Ignacio's reputation preceded him wherever he went, both as a teacher and as a duelist. It was well known that he had crossed sticks with some of the best martial artists of his homeland and he lived to talk about it. He taught many styles of Arnis including the following: Visayas, Pangasinan, Ilocano, and Tagalog. From this teacher Grandmaster Lazo learned many things including "Palis" (Stroking) and "Lastiko". Grandmaster Lazo remained his loyal student until his departure for the United States in 1975.

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. Advertisement 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.