

FMA

Informative

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Kalis Ilustrisimo

Insisting on maintaining the purity of the system as Tatang taught it.



Master Antonio "Tony" Diego



Master Romeo "Romy" Macapagal

Master Christopher 'Topher' Ricketts



The System of Kalis Ilustrisimo
Tatang and the Teachers of Kalis Ilustrisimo

Tatang Antonio Ilustrisimo
Master Antonio “Tony” Diego
Master Christopher “Topher” Ricketts
Master Romeo “Romy” Macapagal

The Sword of Ilustrisimo

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The Author: Bella Marie Baron Saguin (Peachie)
The Basics of Kalis Ilustrisimo System “As I was Taught”



The FMA Informative was lucky to be able to have Bella Marie Baron Saguin (Peachie) tell us of her experience in Kalis Ilustrisimo and share the basic concepts that Masters Tony Diego, Christopher Ricketts (passed away October 5, 2010), and Romeo Macapagal have carried on with their experiences in learning Kalis Ilustrisimo from Tatang Antonio Ilustrisimo.



Bella Marie Baron Saguin (Peachie) has never outgrown her childhood fantasy as a mighty warrior. She joined Hwa Rang Do, an elite Korean Martial Arts, and then later enrolled in another discipline Jeet Kun Do, however she felt her training was not enough. When she found the group BAKBA-KAN, her quench for a full combat activity was satisfied. She was accepted in Bakbakan and became the first lady Black Belt. She owes a debt of gratitude to his mentor and friend, the Grandmaster of Bakbakan, Christopher Ricketts.

Today, she has devoted her time promoting the Filipino martial arts. Her goal is for Arnis to gain recognition not only in other countries but in her own country as well. She has continuously rallied Arnis, wrote articles about it and has promoted the art whenever given the chance. She is the secretary of the National Filipino Martial Arts Association and has organized mall tours for the different clubs. An Arnisador herself she continuously trains with the Grandmaster of Kalis Ilustrisimo MasterAntonio Diego, she not only loves the Filipino culture and the art, but has embraced it as well.

Peachie has had the urge to practice the martial arts since childhood in her own words this is how she got engrossed in the Filipino martial arts.

Ever since she was a child she has always dreamed of becoming a good martial artist. Peachie has always imaged herself involved in a fight, fighting and clawing her way to victory, reigning over her vanquished opponents. This has been a deep ambition burning inside her for a long, long time.

At first, Peachie was just contented with simply fantasizing and using her imagination. Later on this desire turned into a consuming passion and martial arts became an obsession. This prompted her to watch and observe martial arts and their champions. All of the ones she has observed had their own unique qualities and superior techniques but none had the type of “action” she was looking for. Peachies search finally ended when she chanced upon an old acquaintance who invited her to attend and observe a Korean discipline he was training in. As Peachie watched with keen eyes, she noticed that it was like a combination of different martial arts disciplines all rolled into one. Peachie was fascinated and captured by this martial art and decided to join.

Read and enjoy for these are the basic concepts of Kalis Ilustrisimo.

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.

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The System of Kalis Ilustrisimo

The fighting concept of an Ilustrisimo student is to move at an angle to the side of the person and to limit the opponent’s attacking and countering options. The body does not crouch. There is no deep foundation as in a Karate-type stance. Many other arnis styles have deep stances, because of the need for stability in slippery, muddy conditions as in rice fields or mountain trails. They have found a similarity in deep Karate stances and adapted its ritualized approach to training. Tatang’s style could be compared to European saber fencing, with its emphasis on economy of movement, the necessity for mobility, and near mathematical efficiency.

In the beginning of training, the student will learn a pattern of movements from the Elastico and Retirada which are for mid-to-long range fighting. From there, the student moves to Combate General, composed of about 22 techniques which are divided into sets.

A lot of books have been written about arnis, its form, stances and the basic striking techniques, the attack and defense form. In this issue we will tackle the same, in a more simplified approach.

We start all forms with a natural stance, feet together, the right hand holding the stick in the upright position, and the left hand

holding the right wrist.

Fighting Stance is when we move the left foot backwards, the left hand is held shoulder height at the side to parry attacks, and the right foot very slightly bended forward. The elbow of the right hand holding the stick in the upwards position should be close to the side brushing the side with its move.

It is imperative that you hold the stick up to the edge to be able to execute a forceful strike and counter strikes. Leaving a few inches from the edge of the stick is effective in close range encounter. Grip should not be too tight to prevent the stick from dropping resulting from a forceful attack.

nature of combat does not allow favorable situation at all times. The Ilustrisimo practitioner is thus trained to aptly handle various weapons of various lengths and sizes depending on what is available.

Tatang was very involved with the importance of timing. His major focus was on timing. The concept of maintaining specific distances from the opponent such as long, medium, short, and trankada (locking techniques executed at very close range) had a lot to do with improving timing along with angles of attack.

Tatang had no rankings or levels. You were either a student or shared your experience with neophytes as an instructor. He never offered information. It was up to the student to ask the right question.

Tatang believed that techniques were more important than the execution. For if the technique is bad, it requires a very skilled person to execute it and overcome an opponent, whereas, an efficient technique even if executed poorly will work to protect ones’ self.

Master Antonio “Tony” Diego

In his early youth, Tony Diego used to observe the training method of the siblings of Islaw Romo, one of the best and famous Eskrimador in Pasil, Cebu. He watched with interest as they train with the rest of Islaw Romo’s fighters. Because he lived not far away, Tony Diego’s playmates were the grandchildren of the revered Eskrimador, who even in their early years were adept in the art of the sword. Their favorite game then is to imitate the fighting techniques of Islaw Romo as he teaches untiringly the other masters, such as Pedring Romo, Carlito Romo, Casio Labuntog, Carling Cabasa, Timor Maranga, Manoy Biro, Atty. Toribio Rodel and Roque Banahaw Abellar, to name a few.

In high school at Cebu Institute of Technology, Tony Diego’s interest in eskrima continued.

When Tony moved to Manila, he trained Balintawak style arnis with the Eskrimadors from Cebu while he was working at Piers and at the same time training with Berting Presas in Quiapo, a district of Manila. Soon after, he met Antonio “Tatang” Ilustrisimo in 1974, whose simple but ferocious style greatly impressed him. He then requested Tatang to teach him. At first Tatang would not teach Tony, explaining that it was only for his use alone. He said he remained undefeated because others do not know his style. Tony, far from being deterred, relentlessly pestered Tatang with attention and gifts until the old man finally agreed to teach him the ways of



Tatang Ilustrisimo and Master Tony Diego

the blade.

Compared with Tatang, Tony teaches almost the same way with the exception that he has structured his instruction procedures into sets of techniques which make learning easier. This comes from having seen it from the student’s point of view.

Tony has insisted on maintaining the purity of the system as Tatang taught it. The only change is the way the Ilustrisimo system is now taught in a structured sense, which Tatang did not.

As a teacher of eskrima, Tony has earned the highest reputation as a person and as an instructor. He fully believes that a student who learns the Ilustrisimo system should give credit where credit is due, and not to learn and then claim it or its derivatives as a personal innovation or declare it as coming from an imagined family tradition. To illustrate: Roy Harris was taught by Tony and Romy. When Mr. Harris was showing the Ilustrisimo techniques to Dan Inosanto, these were recognized as the same techniques which Regino Ilustrisimo, Tatang’s youngest uncle, had tried to teach Mr. Ino-

Tatang and the Teachers of Kalis Ilustrisimo

My understanding of the Ilustrisimo System from the three teachers of Ilustrisimo Master Tony Diego, Master Topher Ricketts and Master Romy Macapagal



Antonio Ilustrisimo, Tatang as he was popularly known was a warrior in the strictest sense of the word. He was a street fighter and his manner of instruction was situational. It was not configured in a step-wise manner from basic

movements. His philosophy was that there was nothing basic and nothing advanced. All of what he taught was a quintessential extract of battle and were all equal in efficiency. Fight situations dictated the techniques to be used.

Tatang would ask you to attack him and he would execute a technique. If you wanted him to repeat that technique, you would have to execute the attack exactly as it was first executed (same angle distance, speed, etc.), because if the attack differed in any way, Tatang would use a modification or different technique in defending and countering. However, if the attack was executed exactly the same as before, just maybe he would repeat the same technique. For as said before, aspect-

distance-speed-angle, were never exactly the same to Tatang and he would use a different technique for each.

While Tatang was often seen teaching in Luneta, it does not end there. Dedicated student would go to Tatang’s house for further instruction. This is where Tatang would explain the deeper meaning of his system-philosophy of combat, presence of mind in battles, correct body positioning, blade / kalis awareness and orientation, and the use of the eye’s peripheral view. The list is endless because of the wealth of knowledge and experience the old man has.

Oftentimes questions were asked why the Ilustrisimo style has no standard measurement of sticks. The reason behind is because the

santo. This means that the transmission of the system had gone unchanged from Regino’s generation to Tatang’s to Tony and Romy’s and to the present generation of students.

Tony does not really charge for his teaching, as he teaches friends, friends of friends, and sons of friends. If a student pays, he counts it as an added blessing. His only request to his student is to be respectful, mindful and diligent in training.

Master Christopher “Topher” Ricketts



Tatang Ilustrisimo and Master Christopher Ricketts

Master Topher Richetts whose passion in martial arts started when he was about 4 years old, trained with Tatang alongside Master Tony Diego. Obsessed by the simplicity and effectiveness of Tatang’s techniques, he documented all movements and committed to memory and heart the system. Born with a warrior and predator’s instinct, Topher has internalized Tatang’s method and has maintained the purity of the system while teaching it to his students.

Master Tony Diego with senior student Tom Dy Tang



Master Romeo “Romy” Macapagal

Romy Macapagal commenced training with Tatang in 1986. He saw the movements not as stick movements but as sword movements, which was confirmed by Tatang. Romy then made steel play-swords at which Tatang was transformed from lackadaisical movements with the stick into pure blade virtuosity.

Asking Tatang if the movements had any names, Tatang then said that there were specific names for specific movements. Romy and Tony then cataloged and classified these techniques into the present format.

Romy remembers practicing with Tatang at Luneta Park. He would practice for a couple of hours with the group and then he and Tony would go to Tatang’s house to practice for the rest of the day, with a break for lunch. If time permitted or when the mood was on to continue practice, Romy would have his driver pick up his children from school, bring them home while he and Tony would continue to practice until late at night. Many times they ended up sleeping at Tatang’s house. This went on for 4 or 5 years.

With the combined effort of Tony Diego and Romy Macapagal, the techniques with their respective names have been classified, and as such are easier to learn and remember.



The Sword of Ilustrisimo

Fighting techniques of any martial art are expressions of the point of view and the resulting strategy of that martial art. Typically these would come from a particularly noted warrior. Today, there is a great outpouring of martial arts all claiming superiority. Unquestionably, their original proponents were good and survived battles to be able to transmit their experiences of successful encounters. However, there is now a divide in the use of martial arts. There are those who intend these martial crafts for their original purpose of winning over an opponent in life and death situations. A greater majority see the martial arts as a form of exercise with the competitive aspect modified as a sport. These different points of view naturally give rise to different emphases. Where sport is the objective, the life and death

point of view must take a back seat.

Kalis Ilustrisimo in its pure form tries to maintain the life and death combative perspective and expresses this point of view in its techniques and their applications. There has been also a need to enter the Filipino martial arts world, which has a greater emphasis on the sports aspect. For this, Ilustrisimo methods and techniques have perforce been modified in order to keep within the structure of the necessary constricting rules of sports. These rules are meant for the safety of participants and life and death combat movements are illegal. This is true for other martial arts - Kendo, Jujitsu, Fencing, etc.

Because of the greater emphasis on sports in the present Filipino martial arts community,

students are more - keen on learning techniques believing these will enhance their skill and their chances of winning competitions. In contrast, instruction in Ilustrisimo is based on the foundational combat philosophy of Antonio “Tatang” Ilustrisimo when teaching the techniques and their application. This point of view delineates objectives which give rise to the movements or techniques necessary to achieve such objectives.

The original main objective of Tatang’s fighting system is winning in battle and coming out of it alive and unhurt. For this, a flexible fighting capability is necessary. Thus the Ilustrisimo system has a varied set of techniques which are effective at various distances and with various weapons all the way to empty hands.

Following are the techniques and fighting distances classified into seven sets based on the syntax, logic and pattern of the techniques.

The sets are:

- Elastico-Retirada: long to middle range
- Combate General: middle to short range
- Pluma-Cruzada: middle to short range
- Tochada-Media Fraile: middle range
- Daga y Daga Corto: middle to short range
- Trancadas: short range
- Sogo: middle to long range

These are played with various weapons.

The weapons are:

- Dos Navajas or Doble Baston which is two swords or two sticks. Two daggers may also be used.
- Sword and dagger
- Single sword

- Single dagger
- Single, double-handed long sword
- Staff or spear
- Double-pointed short sticks which originally were marlinspikes for splicing rope made of carabao or water buffalo horn. They should not be confused with the Thai double-ended knives with a handle in the middle.

Below are the different conceptual terms used and their applications in the Ilustrisimo system.

Sombra

The concept of angle and open of the forearm of the weapon hand: the edge or the point or the fist is always pointed towards the opponent’s weapon hand, as it is the fulcrum of all weapon movement. Flattening this angle ensures

that the forearm, elbow and arm are protected by your blade. The whole stance shadows the opponent’s weapon. From this posture one can easily deflect and parry and cut. This is the general conceptual idea of sombra, of shadowing.

Sombra also means really physically covering/shielding the opponent’s sword, as with an estrella or any of the other tech-

niques. This cover allows a movement either to command (take control of) the opponent’s sword as in a seguida, or a kinabay-an or direct into the pasante as you cross your opponent’s sword in his attack. So the sombrada, the pluma, the cruzada are sombras in the sense of a shield made of your own sword, keeping you safe as you move onto your cut - a pasante or a directa.

also involves the setting up of the opponent so that he can cut only in a certain direction, left and down, left and up, etc., from his chamber or when he is unchambered and still out of control of his weapon. Praksyon can also mean a broken rhythm.

Praksyon

From the word “fraction” meaning a portion of. Praksyon means that a feeding set of, say 1-2-3-4-5 is suddenly broken up so that the feed can be a 5-3-4-1-2. This is the original meaning that Tatang explained for FRACCION

(Spanish spelling). This is different from the common interpretation of praksyon which is actually a matter of timing which involves either cutting before your opponent’s cut has matured or cutting after your opponent’s has expended itself. This matter of timing

Cutting Angles

(Tom Dy in white shirt, Tony Diego in blue shirt)



Directa

Recta or directa is again simply cutting at any target that is open. However, when teaching this part of Ilustrisimo, the mantra “sombra, pasante, directa” is inscribed into the student’s consciousness as a strategy of victory. While we can see an opening and cut at it, the opponent’s sword is free and may be able to parry or counter cut, which of course does not end in winning, for you. The bad habit of exchanging pot shots with a sparring mate has the result of just wanting to be able to deliver a cut instead of implementing a survival strategy intended for victory. What is this? It is to ensure that the opponent’s sword is contacted, commanded (controlled), brought to a position where it is the least effective or harmless. That is sombra. The subsequent pasante cut to the arm or hand is to ensure that this neutralized sword is disabled. The third movement, directa, to an opening of a body target is the final act which ends in victory

Techniques

The sombra, pasante and directa: Sombra is parrying or sliding off or covering, shielding. Pasante means cutting at the hand or arm after the parry. And directa is simply cutting at a very small opening offered when the opponent cuts at you or after sombra and pasante. It is also cutting in with perfect timing without parrying as your opponent cuts at you in order to avoid a reflex

without having endangered ones’ self. All of these in one movement. Sniping or pot shots impose too great a demand on timing and skill. In a fight we are always behind in time so that we need strategies to ensure that we match up with opponent’s time and overtake. In sniping, there are 3 results. Both are dead, the opponent is dead, you are dead. This 66% chance of dying is unacceptable. Even the 33% chance of surviving is not. Therefore, we employ the strategy of the mantra: “sombra, pasante, directa”. The techniques of Ilustrisimo are designed for when you are ambushed, behind time. In fact, to be able to employ them properly, you have to be behind time. This precious paradox has been the objective of the best swordsmen all over the world. This is very important.

The nuances of measure, line, distance, time (beat) and timing, angle and specific techniques will be better understood once the foregoing is absorbed. How to be behind time?

Enganyo. Baiting. Feinting. Forcing an opponent to make a committed attack.

Note: *In the sombra your sword does not have to engage the opponent’s. It simply shadows, as a hunter stalks its prey which is the opponent’s sword. Engaging that sword, commanding it can come when necessary or with the left hand. But it must be shadowed and that is why its name is sombra which means something that provides a shadow, like a hat, a sombrero.*

Being so close to the opponent’s sword and therefore sword hand the pasante is an automatic consequence. It cannot help but be delivered. Giving in to the temptation to attack the body leaves you open to a probable counter of your opponent’s freed sword. This is unacceptable.

The directa is now simply a final option. To give your opponent the warrior’s grace or shame him and be continually vigilant of his revenge.

defense on your opponent’s part upon feeling the weight of your blade on his blade. This directa requires absolute skill When properly executed, Tatang’s techniques look slow, lumbering even and you would be surprised that they are able to counter, parry, or simply cut away at a faster, stronger, more energetic oppo-

nent. It is the placidity of attitude and perfect execution of the technique which allows it superiority. The techniques were evolved for instances when one is behind time. The angle, distance, type of technique are the physical elements necessary to bring victory but only to the calm, unhurried, unafraid and confident mind.

Cutting at the opponent's hand (Pasante)
Cutting at the opponent's hand as a defense and offence in one movement



Examples of commanding or taking control of the opponent's blade by sliding it off and moving it out of the line of attack.



In contacting Master Tony Diego, one can do so through:
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Visagra

At an earlier stage of practice, the turning point is moved off center as far as the outer opposite edge of the body, so turning from either right or left hip will provide the most offset. However, once measure and timing are acquired, including the courage to take un pulgada, an inch distance of the opponent’s blade from one’s self, one pivots from the exact center line of the body. Thus, if a thrust is directed at the left half of the body, a beginner should pivot on his right heel and hip. This provides a lot of clearance and allows confidence to build up. However, the perfect movement is to allow the thrust to nearly graze the body as you pivot around your center line. This un pulgada movement allows the body to be used as an anvil upon which to pincer the blade with the hand and the arm taking command.

Striking

Any striking martial craft depends first on timing. Technique and strength come next. Of course, good technique helps timing. The jumping and rolling around of Silat is more for evasion than attack. The light-bodied Malay has very little competition when the need for liveness and agility are concerned. They have exploited these with all of their movements. Again, the public does not recognize that the jumping and rolling and body-Englishing are almost purely for evasion. Very little for counter-striking.

The tricky counter-strikes at very close range of KI come from the Silat ancestry albeit modified by the discipline and physics of Spanish fencing. I hope that one day some people will see the es-

entials of both Silat and European weapons work and become better through these.

Note: *There is no such technique as “trancada heneral.”*

Trancada means to lock. However the sound is similar to atracada which is to come along broadside, a nautical term. When cerrada is attached to atracada, it means to come in VERY close. The heneral means “in general” and is used to denote 19 or so techniques, as in combate heneral. There is a technique which is ala contra cerrada which means to prevent your opponent going into cerrada from abierta and involves yourself moving into cerrada, going forearm to forearm to block and attack at the same time.

In all, trancada heneral was coined, I think, to mean “close in techniques” at trancada range in much the same way Caballes, a student of Tatang, coined “Cerrada System” to mean “close in work”. There is an Obsession in the Filipino martial arts with flow while fighting at very close quarters, the idea being to be able to continue cutting and parrying at sweat-to-sweat distance forever. This is actually a training drill. In an actual fight, a hit would be scored by either opponent within the first 3 exchanges at most.

Efficiency:

The Shortest Distance

Tatang always emphasized efficiency and stressed the concept of taking the shortest route to an objective whether the objective is a cut or a parry. Of course, there is no difference between the two as understood in Ilustrisimo. The cut is a parry, the parry is a cut. What Tatang meant was not to take ex-

traneous movements which would take time and delay delivery. When we look at the concept of sombra, in the sense of shadowing, we can see that shadowing the opponent’s sword is ensuring the shortest distance for our own sword to travel towards the opponent.

Count

Tatang referred to this as “bilang” which means count. The idea is to have the least number of movements, preferably one movement only in fighting. If a parry were conceived as a pure parry, meaning to deflect and another movement taken to deliver a cut, the resulting two-move technique would create a gap and allow a skilled opponent to come and counter or cut between the one and the two count.

Gap

For Tatang gap meant an opening which offered an opportunity to defeat an opponent. This gap could be one of awareness where the opponent is awake but unable to move. An open guard position which would require too much time to defend against a strike. The split second in between the two movements of a block and a strike. A controlled weapon hand of the opponent is a gap thru which he can be struck.

Using the Opponent’s Force

Almost all Ilustrisimo parries use the force of the opponent’s attack to provide energy for a counter cut.

All of the foregoing are separate descriptions of the Ilustrisimo point of view concerning efficiency. In a life and death situation, the most efficient technique gives you the edge towards victory. There is no other result acceptable.

Bella Marie Baron Saguin (Peachie)



Peachie has had the urge to practice the martial arts since childhood in her own words, this is how she got engrossed in the Filipino martial arts.

Ever since Peachie was a child I have always dreamed of becoming a good martial artist. She has always imaged herself involved in a fight, fighting and clawing my way to victory, reigning over her vanquished opponents. This deep ambition burned in her for a long, long time.

At first, Peachie was just contented with simply fantasizing and using her imagination. Later on this desire turned into a consuming passion and martial arts became an obsession. This prompted Peachie to watch and observe martial arts and their champions. All of the ones Ishe observed had their own unique qualities and superior techniques but none had the type of “action” she was looking for. Her search finally ended when she chanced upon an old acquaintance who invited her to attend and observe a Korean discipline he was training in. As Peachie watched with keen eyes,

she noticed that it was like a combination of different martial arts disciplines all rolled into one. She was fascinated and captured by this martial art and decided to join.

Her first day of training was really exciting. For Peachie it was the realization of her dreams. She was oblivious of the time, of the hard training and of the rigid discipline. She was in ecstasy. Peachie was always looking forward to each and every training session. Her enthusiasm never waned, instead it seemed to increase more and more as her stamina and skills increased. However, a time came when she felt that the art that she was pursuing was not enough. Peachie needed more and craved for more. She could not identify what was missing and yet knew that she was not fulfilled.

Peachie eventually enrolled in another martial art as well, making sure that the sessions were not in conflict with each other. For a while this arrangement seemed to fill the gap that nagged at her.

One day Peachie arrived early for her scheduled training session. She could hear commands being barked at where the Taekwondo classes where usually held. Curiosity got the best of her since she knew that there were no Taekwondo classes scheduled for that particular hour. She climbed the stairs and sneaked a peek at whatever was going on.

There before her eyes were two guys fully equipped with head gear, body protectors, and boxing gloves sparring at full force. Not a single blow was held back. Kicks and punches were being ex-

changed with precision and dodged and parried with grace and speed. Peachie looked and asked herself: *What discipline is this?* Peachie looked around and saw the other people in the training hall, men in black with this curious looking logo on their shirts. She did not see any familiar face. None of them were of the Taekwondo group. She focused her eyes back at the two combatants. Peachie was mesmerized by the intensity and seriousness of their training.

Peachie was thrilled and filled with excitement. Deep within her, the spirit was shouting “*This is it, Peachie. This is what you’ve been looking for!*”

She was to learn later on that she had eavesdropped in on a Bakbakan training session. The group present then was Ramon Tulfo, Miguel Zubiri, Edgar Aristorenas, Benny Litonjua and trainers Dodong Sta. Iglesia, Peter Sescon and Torry Seas.

Conducting the classes were Masters Christopher Ricketts and Tony Diego. Peachie stayed and watched and waited until they finished their training. From that time on, she always arrived early and took my position at the stairs to watch, making sure that she was inconspicuous and out of their way. For several sessions Peachie was content to be at what she now considered her perch, watching and admiring their training sessions.

One day Master Christopher Ricketts approached her and gave her a chair to sit on telling Peachie it was more comfortable than the steps she was sitting on. Peachie realized then that she was talking to the Topher Ricketts whose name was held in high

esteem by most serious martial artists in the Philippines. Later during that session he would return and ask her about her interest in the martial arts. Peachie explained to him that she had been taken up two disciplines of martial arts but has recently dropped one and now concentrated only on one.

Summoning her courage, Peachie asked him if he could teach her. His answer only made her admire and respect him more. He said, “I could only help you, but your loyalty should remain in the discipline you are in right now.” And true to his word, he did help her. He assigned Dodong Sta. Iglesia to be her trainer. Peachies training suddenly took an abrupt turn; she was back to the basics. The training was very rigid; she was pushed to the limits. She would finish each session exhausted but fulfilled. The training was very different. It opened up a new dimension for her. Peachie then realized that she no longer had any interest in her one other remaining discipline. All the enthusiasm she had for it was not just waning but gone. The magic was no longer there. she realized that she would only be disillusioning herself and her instructors if she continued training with them.



Peachie undergoing focus mitt training with Chief Instructor Christopher Ricketts

Peachie made her exit gracefully and with their blessing. They realized something happened to her for her performance improved leaps and bounds since she started training with Bakbakan. They were happy that she found what she was looking for.

From then on, Master Topher Ricketts and trainer Dodong Sta. Iglesia trained Peachie on a regular basis. Her stances were corrected, forms checked, punches and kicks were made more defined. She was taught different styles of offense and defense. She was trained in unarmed combat as well as in weaponry skills, including sticks and knives. Peachie was also taught different katas from several disciplines to develop and improve her intrinsic energy. Because of this intense and rigid training, her skills had improved and her self-confidence bolstered to the point where sparring sessions became the norm rather than the exception.

Looking back, Peachie knows and realizes that she had become a different person, a far, far cry from what she was before. She owe it all to her teacher, Master Christopher Ricketts, to whom she had so much faith and reverence. Also to her trainer Dodong Sta. Iglesia who was very patient and understanding. Peachie also owed a debt of gratitude to the members of Bakbakan who had been very supportive of her, then the only female member of Bakbakan, and most of all to God who answered her fervent prayer

Peachie Baron-Saguin training with Master Tony Diego



and gave her a good mentor and a solid, supportive group.

When Master Christopher Ricketts left for the States, Peachie started training with Master Diego on a regular basis with his Binondo group, the Kalis Ilustrisimo. Her training then took on a leap. She was showed the proper way to hold the blade, not to grip the handle too tight, to prevent it from being disarmed when struck heavily with another sword. She was then taught the different kinds and forms of striking and blocking, and the footwork and stances that goes for each attack and counter attack. She was asked to repeatedly execute a particular strike before moving on to the next. Master Diego has always reiterated the importance of a repetitive exercise for one to gain mastery of the form.

Soon enough Master Diego taught Peachie how to use the stick and knife at the same time. This style is called Puntai y Daga. From

this style, her interest grew more and more and she always looked forward to sword play with Master Diego, where her speed and accuracy to block and strike were put to test, her distance and movements, checked and corrected. There are moments when Master Diego would attack Peachie when her guard was down to find out how she would react. If she stopped, he would tell her not to think but just to react, otherwise she would get hit. The word “sorry” is never used in the gym. If you get hit, it’s your fault.

After considerable drills with a wooden sword, Master Diego gave Peachie as a gift, a real sword to practice with. Again her strikes and counter strikes were

checked. Using the real sword, Master Diego would ask her to execute the different strikes and counter strikes. The purpose of this exercise, he said, is to gain better control of the blade and to prevent improper techniques from developing, and thus trains the student to hit at the right angle. Her first swordplay using a real sword was with Master Diego and was really scary, but then she passed with flying colors.

Suffice it to say, Peachie was taught not only to defend and attack on a standing position, but on a sitting and lying down position as well. The exercise of ascending and descending the stairs during a duel is so difficult and tiring. Disarming is also part

of the drills.

Training with Master Diego is not easy. Peachie often find herself catching her breath during the swordplay, while Master Diego is laughing and comfortably attacking and parrying her strikes. At the end of each session, She is totally exhausted. Her shoulders ache and she could hardly lift her arms. At home before going to bed, Peachie would take a muscle relaxant to relieve the pain so she could train again in the next session.

As Peachie has continued her training with Master Diego, she is learning not only the art of bladed weapons but also, the essence of a good swordsman, the discipline and the commitment that one must have to the art.



Master Tony Diego and students at his Binondo gym.

The Basics of Kalis Ilustrisimo System “As I was Taught”

By: Peachie Baron Saguin

Orientation

The orientation of Kalis Ilustrisimo is based on a bladed weapon. When we parry or deflect an attack, whether we are using a stick or a sword the principle we use is that of a bladed weapon.

Body Mechanics

The Ilustrisimo style has a lot of elbow and body movements. We shift our body weight when we are attack or when we execute an attack. We call our body mechanics, De Elastico.

Size and Length of Our Weapons

We do not have a specific size or length of weapons. We use whatever is available at hand. When the length of the stick reaches the sternum, we considered that a long stick.

Our Weapons are the Following:

The weapons we use are the Espada or the sword, olisi or the baston, tukon, a long hard stick use in pushing the boat away from the shore, pinga is made from flexible flat bamboo use in carrying pales at both edge, alho a long rounded wood use in removing the skin of the rice thru repetitive pounding, and the corto, popularly known as the dulo dulo.

How We Hold Our Weapon/s

The way we hold our weapon signifies the kind of combat fight we are about to engage in. Holding it till the end indicates a long range combat. This for us has more power and speed. Holding it a few inches above the end signifies a short range fighting and we can use the end as ponyo. Holding our stick at the middle (centro baston), is a neutral position. We

hold it when we are walking, an indication that we have no intention of engaging in any combat, however even in this position we can still defend ourselves when attacked. Holding it till the end with the stick at the back of our arms is also a non combat position, but like the centro baston, we can also defend ourselves with this position when attack. We call this position susi.

How We Grip Our Weapon

The middle finger is use to grip the handle and the thumb is place above the point finger to have a better control of the sword or stick. The third finger and the little finger are relaxed till a strike is executed.

Our Stance

Our stance is similar to a boxer’s stance. From the natural position, we put one foot backwards, weight at the center, and knees slightly bended. Lead foot is lightly touching the ground for easy movement. Rear foot is planted on the ground, heel up for fast movement. We stand tall, not leaning forward or backward. Our lead hand corresponds to our lead foot.

Position of Our Arms

The hand holding the sword/stick is not too far from the body, the elbow slightly rubbing the side and our weapon is not pointing backwards but in a slightly upward position. Our other arm is close also to the sides with bended elbow, open palm ready to parry or deflect an attack. Our thumb is concealed by the four fingers to avoid injury when parrying.

Our Vision

We make use of our peripheral vision. To maximize our peripheral vision, we slightly tuck in our chin. In this position, our focus is in wide range and not concentrated only in front.

Our Cutting techniques

When we execute a strike or a cutting attack, is it like throwing a ball. Movement includes hip twisting and foot twisting and the other hand synchronizes with each movement, ready to parry or deflect an attack.

Our Different Strikes

- 1. Arko
- 2. Real
- 3. Angolo
- 4. Planchada
- 5. Alda biz
- 6. Rompida
- 7. Sampal
- 8. Abaniko
- 9. Witik
- 10. Buklis
- 11. Rapelon
- 12. Bagsak Angolo
- 13. Bagsak Real
- 14. Salto
- 15. Corto

Foot Work

- 1. Retirada - Natural footwork
- 2. Ekis
- 3. Lutang
- 4. Angolo
- 5. Tatlong Bao palihis
- 6. Tatlong Bao paatras
- 7. Doblete

Our Different Strikes and Counter Strikes

Strikes/Attack

- 1. Angolo Abierta

Counter Strike/Defense

From Abierta Position:

- Vertical
- Cruzada
- Cadena Real
- Recta Buka
- A la Contra Serrada
- Doble Carrera

From Cerrada Position:

- Vertical
- Cruzada
- Praile Pauyon
- Sunkiti
- Recta Buka

- 2. Planchada Abierta (Neck)

From Abierta Position:

- Estrella
- Florete

- 3. Planchada Low Abierta (hips)

From Abierta Position

- Cruzette Tusok
- Salok
- Bagsak
- Cruzada
- Arko

From Cerrada Position

- Cruzada
- Doblete
- Cerrada

- 4.Angolo Cerrada

From Abierta Positiion

- Pluma/ Vertical
- Sunkiti
- Pauyon
- Praile

- 5.Planchada Cerrada (neck)

From Abierta Position

- Pluma
- Florete
- Vertical Abierta

- 6.Planchada Cerrada (hips)

From Abierta Position

- Crusada low
- Bagsak Angolo
- Salok

From Cerrada Position

- Crusada low
- Doblete

- 7. Tusok Abierta (Belly)

From Abierta Position

- Angolo , other hand deflect the sword
- Planchada, other hand deflect the sword

8. Tusok Cerrada (Chest)	From Abierta Position - Vertical - Pauyon - Estrella Abierta - Pluma - Arko
9. Tusok Abierta	From Cerrada Position - Pluma - Sampal - Kabay an - Estrella Cerrada - Vertical
10. Real	From Abierta Position: - Media Praile - Pluma - Tumbada - Cadena Real - Cadena Real Tumbada - Alda biz

Our training in Kalis Ilustrisimo involves both left and right hand drills. As Tatang emphasizes on the necessity of learning to use both hands, my first lesson with Master Tony was Puntai y daga involving weapons in both hands.

Forms of Puntai y Daga (Sword and Dagger)

First Part - Dagger Hand

12 Strikes	Counter Strikes
1. Angolo	Sword hand - Angolo strike Dagger hand - Parry
2. Planchada Low Cerrada	Sword hand - Cruzada low Dagger hand - Thrust heart
3. Planchado Low Abierta	Sword hand - Alda viz Dagger hand - Parry daga pointing downward
4. Angolo Cerrada	Sword hand - Cruzada high Dagger hand - Parry
5. Tusok Abdomen	Sword hand - Angolo Strike Dagger hand - Parry daga pointing upward
6. Thrust Cerrada Heart	Sword hand - Vertical Dagger hand - Follow thru, dagger pointing up-wards
7. Tusok Abierta Heart	Sword hand - Pluma Cerrada/vertical strike Dagger hand - Block, dagger pointing upwards
8. Tusok Serrada Abdomen	Sword hand - Cruzette Dagger hand - Parry, dagger over the sword
9. Alda viz	Sword hand - Aldabiz Dagger hand - Block, dagger in acute angle

10. Tusok Cerrada Eye	Sword hand - Vertical Dagger hand - Follow thru
11. Tusok Abierta Eye	Sword hand - Pluma Dagger hand - Block, dagger pointing upwards
12. Real from Cerrada	Sword hand - Praile Pauyon Dagger hand - Thrust Chest

Forms of Puntai y Daga
Second Part

12 Strikes	12 Counter strikes
1. Real Abierta	Sword hand - Praile Dagger hand - Block
2. Planchada Cerrada	Sword hand - Cruzette Dagger hand - Block over the sword
3. Planchada Abierta	Sword hand - Block over the dagger Dagger hand - Cruzette
4. Angolo Cerrada	Sword hand - Praile from Cerrada Dagger hand - Parry
5. Tusok Belly	Sword hand - Thrust to belly/deflect Sword/shift to cruzette Dagger hand - Parry daga pointing downwards
6. Tusok Cerrada Heart	Sword hand - Estrella abierta/cut belly and Deflect sword Dagger hand - Block and deflect sword
7. Tusok Abierta Heart	Sword hand - Estrella Cerrada/cut/deflect sword Dagger hand - Block and deflect sword
8. Tusok Cerrada Belly	Sword hand - Aldabiz shift to Cruzada low Dagger hand - Parry
9. Alda Biz	Sword hand - Classico then belly thrust Dagger hand - Block, dagger in acute angle
10. Tusok Cerrada Eye	Sword hand - Pauyon shift to planchada corto Dagger hand - Block
11. Tusok Abierta Eye	Sword hand - Kabay an to abanico then cut Belly Dagger hand - Block and parry
12. Real	Sword hand - Boca de lobo Dagger hand - Follow thru, dagger pointing upwards and parry

De Pondo - Blocking/Parrying/Deflecting

10 Strikes	10 Counter Strikes
1. Planchada Abierta Neck	- Estrella Cerrada
2. Angolo Abierta Temple	- Vertical Cerrada
3. Real Abierta	- cruzada Abierta high
4. Planchada Cerrada Hips	- Cruzada Cerrada low
5. Planchada Abierta Hips	- Aldabiz Abierta
6. Planchada Cerrada Neck	- Estrella Abierta
7. Angolo Cerrada Temple	- Vertical Abierta
8. Real	- Cruzada Derrada
9. Planchada Abiera Hips	- Aldabiz Abierta low
10. Planchada Cerrada Hips	- Cruzada Cerrada low

Malay Balay Bukidnon Training Camp

The camp is done once a year only. This is by invitation only that is why it is not advertise. The camp is an ITC (Instructors Training Course). The camp is for instructors or instructor’s level in other systems who would like to learn Kalis Ilustrisimo style. For one to get invited, somebody from the group has to sponsor them, or they can contact Bella Marie Baron Saguin (Peachie) with their martial’s art’s background and their reason for wanting to join the camp. The reason why they do this, is because they have encountered a few people who after training for just a day with them, will claim they are the representative of Ilustrisimo in their country. Before they do not issue certificates, now they will issue one to eliminate the issue of one claiming to be an Ilustrisimo instructor after training for one day.



Master Romy explaining about the system.



Bukidnon Ilustrisimo Training Camp



In contacting about Bukidnon Ilustrisimo Training Camp:
Bella Marie Baron Saguin
Email: [Click Here](#)
Phone: +63 (943) 345-3945

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**



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Click Here and fill in the information. Additional information and .gif, .jpg, .bmp, or .tiff. Email to: Advertise@fmainformative.info



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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 **Article@fmainformative.info**

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