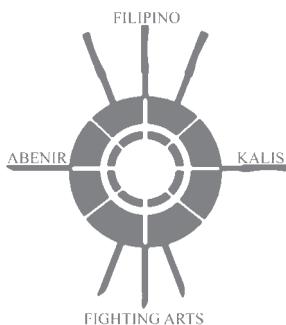


ESKRIMA STREET DEFENSE



ESKRIMA STREET DEFENSE

PRACTICAL TECHNIQUES
FOR DANGEROUS SITUATIONS



Fernando "Bong" Abenir



www.TambuiMedia.com
Spring House, PA USA

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Edited by Mark V. Wiley

Designed by Summer Bonne

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FOREWORD

Over the last 30 years I have met many of the old-timers and new-comers in the Filipino martial arts society. Among the new crop of teachers making their mark is Fernando Abenir. Known as “Bong” to his friends and colleagues, Abenir has been building his name in the Philippines through his teachings at various locations, articles in the *Manila Times* newspaper, appearances on various local television shows demonstrating his art, and worldwide on Facebook and YouTube. His movements are representative of the combat efficacy of the late and legendary Antonio “Tatang” Ilustrisimo, and his late students Grandmaster Antonio Diego and Maestro Pedro Reyes, but with a hint of silat and other arts thrown in the mix. Abenir himself was a student of Reyes and Diego, among other known teachers in Manila. Impressed with his basic approach to the art, I reached out to Bong to see if he’d be interested in writing a book on Eskrima for use on the street—as opposed to its practice as cultural art form, spiritual tradition, or modern combat sport.

He immediately said yes, and together we spent half a year working remotely to bring together for you this book, *Eskrima Street Defense*. In my capacity as publisher I decided on the format and Bong, as the subject matter expert, decided on the techniques. And while the book offers a few chapters on the history, development and terminology of Eskrima—as it is seen in the Philippines—he then offers discussion on tactics and strategies for using the art in street defense and how to become aware of yourself and others in common surroundings. Self-defense, after all, is about more than defensive tactics; it is also about avoiding confrontation through awareness.

Eskrima Street Defense offers dozens of practical techniques for dangerous street encounters divided into six chapters: 1) Hand vs. Hand, 2) Hand vs. Knife, 3) Hand vs. Bolo, 4) Knife vs. Knife, 5) Bolo vs. Bolo, and 6) Improvised Weapons. These techniques are backed up with 20 key principles for application, discussion of the 10 most vulnerable points to strike on the body, how to become aware of your surroundings in the most common public spaces where attacks often occur, and a discussion on common sense rules for self-defense that everyone should heed.

Among Bong Abenir's principles are "Run if you must, fight if you must, but whatever you do, do it decisively and quickly," and "Attack, attack, attack until the assailant ceases to be a threat to your safety." Such concepts are often glossed over in classes teaching the art of Eskrima. This book, like street defense in general, is short and sweet and too the point. The focus is on safety, awareness, and how to survive on the street when you suddenly find yourself in a bad situation.



—Dr. Mark Wiley
Publisher, Tambuli Media
September 23, 2014

AUTHOR'S PREFACE



Eskrima Street Defense is a compilation of techniques strictly based on the practical application of the Filipino martial arts within the context of a street fight. Now what I mean by a “street fight” is when someone finds themselves in a situation wherein they must defend themselves or help another person against an attack on the street. It has nothing to do with the art or the sport of Eskrima; but rather its

application in what are potentially life and death situations. Although there have been many books written about martial arts and self-protection, only a few of them feature the practicality of Eskrima when facing single and multiple attackers, both armed and unarmed.

In response to that need, *Eskrima Street Defense* focuses on different scenarios that may happen outside the safety walls of the martial arts training hall and definitely beyond the realm of sport competition. It provides the reader with different strategies, techniques and street smart moves that may help them out of a bad situation—and may even save them and others from serious injury or even death at the hands of a ruthless attacker. This book addresses how to translate the art of Eskrima to street-ready empty-hand skills against dangerous knife threats, against difficult situations which include third-party protection, against a bolo or machete attack, against improvised weapons such as broken bottles, steel pipes, an ice pick, and more.

Eskrima Street Defense also shows Eskrima techniques used in special armed situations, such as knife against knife encounters, bolo against bolo situations, blunt weapons against edged weapons and vice-versa, scarf against edged weapons, situations against multiple attackers and other possible

street scenarios. Although no book can replace an actual training program taught by a qualified Filipino martial arts instructor, it is still a great guide for any individual who wants to learn a technique or two that might help them against situations where one's life is at stake. This book also serves as an added training resource for advanced FMA practitioners and instructors in any martial art.

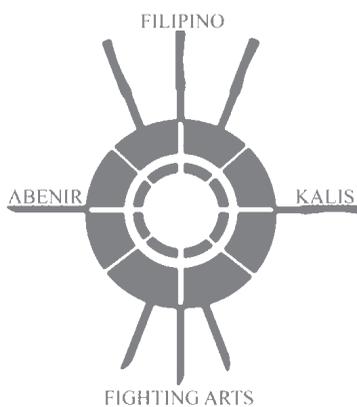
I do, however, strongly advise those who are just starting their quest or pursuit in learning self-protection or in studying the Filipino martial arts that they look for a qualified instructor in order to deepen their understanding of the principles, concepts and techniques described and shown in this book.

This book was not created alone. I would like to thank my student Mr. Adrian Manangan for shooting all of the technique sequence photographs. Thanks to Abenir Kalis instructors Richard Grimaldo, Jong Rivero, Michael Cruz, Norman Manalili, and Leo Beltran; to Abenir Kalis Mandaluyong students Angel Fajutagana, Jay Habuhab, John Mark Marcelo, Bhon Corpuz, and Ms. Jam Chari Nuñez. Special thanks to Abenir Kalis Pinaglabanan Brotherhood for their support: Bryan Dy, Marc Tiong, Audey Joves, Dennis Eala, Thirdy Nabon, g Jonna Bee; and Abenir Kalis Philippines headed by the following Instructors: Herbert Panganiban, Luis Beltran, Chris Dalida, Marvin Mendoza, Abel Diaz, and Ronel Viñas. Last but not least, I offer a very special thank you to Guro Rommel Ramirez who has been my long time training partner who endured a lot of bruises and pain with me during our live sparring sessions and demos. Pugay. Thank you Master Mark Wiley for encouraging me to write this book. Pugay po.

Fernando “Bong” Abenir
Manila, Philippines, 2014

PART 1

DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, STRATEGIES





CHAPTER 1

HISTORY AND DEFINITION OF FILIPINO MARTIAL ARTS



© Artist Ian Sta. Maria

There are martial arts which have their origins in the Philippines. The practitioners of these Filipino martial arts (FMA) emphasize the use of blunt, projectile, and bladed weapons and hand-to-hand combat. Projectile weapons may refer to spears, bow and arrow, blow guns and knives.

Arnis is the popular term commonly used to refer to the Filipino martial arts in the Tagalog regions, especially in Manila where it is more identified as a stick fighting art.

Eskrima comes from the Spanish word *esgrima*, which means “fencing.” In the Visayas, Eskrima is the common name primarily referring to blade-based Filipino martial art (though not always these days as the stick has come into more popular use).

By contrast, Kali is a relatively new term used here in the Philippines to refer to the Filipino martial arts, although it has been in use in the United States for several decades. Some masters have given their explanation as to the origin of this term. However, the word Kali is not a familiar term to most of the Filipino masters or even among the locals here in the Philippines, except among those who have adopted the name in the last decade or so. It is probably more popular in Negros through Grand Tuhon Leo Gaje of Pikiti Tirsia Kali, who is among those who popularized this term, especially in the United States.

On the other hand, *kalis* is a term which means “sword” and is now the preferred term used by Kalis Ilustrisimo Repeticion Orihinal (KIRO) headed



Eskrima Bolo Fighting

by the recently passed, Maestro Antonio Diego. He explained to us that the term is more appropriate for Antonio Ilustrisimo's art due to its blade-based orientation. Although its founder, Antonio "Tatang" Ilustrisimo, originally used the term Eskrima to refer to his art, it was at a time in the late 1980s when he switched to the use of Kali (Kali Ilustrisimo) due to its popular use among foreigners. With so many foreigners coming in to train and expecting to learn "Kali" (as opposed to Eskrima or Arnis), it was decided after Tatang passed away that the term Kalis Ilustrisimo ("Sword of Ilustrisimo") should be used in reference to his art.

I always keep in mind what the late Pedro Reyes from Kalis Ilustrisimo told me, "Names are there just for the sake of labeling the style and preserving the identity of the system. But It's how effective the principles behind every technique is applied during combat and how sound the philosophy of the art that truly matters." These days, all of these terms are being used to refer to all and any of the various Filipino martial arts, whether using weapons or the empty-hands.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF FMA

Nobody really knows the true origin of Arnis or Eskrimas since there were no written documents on the art before the 20th century. This is probably due to the fact that most of the written documents of our ancestors were burned

by the Spaniards and the art was outlawed by Spanish officials. As such, the practice of Filipino martial arts went underground and its masters and practitioners were reduced to roles as fight choreographers and actors on theatrical performances during Moro-Moro stage plays depicting combat between Christians and Muslims. Although for sure there was a martial art being used by our ancestors in order to protect them from other tribes, warring clans and foreign invaders. That is why we have the story between the fight from the army of Magellan and the legendary Lapu-Lapu and his warriors. Nobody knows exactly what kind of martial art they were using—or if they even had a name for it then—but it's quite clear that they knew how to fight well.



Eskrima Empty Hand Defense Against a Knife

As for the claim of others that Kali is the term used before Arnis and Eskrima, or that it is the “mother” of all Filipino martial arts, is still a matter of debate. But there is little proof of this in the records here in the Philippines, and thus it needs further investigation and proof before such a thing can be taken as true. However, there were references to Filipino arts by the likes of Jose Rizal when he studied Arnis as a young lad and even included it in his school curriculum when he set up one during his exile in Dapitan. We also have other well-known historical figures here in the Philippines, such as Juan and Antonio Luna and Marcelo H. del Pilar, who were known to have studied and practiced the art. An epic called *Florante at Laura* by Balagtas also mentions the term Arnis as a form of martial art. The term Kali, however, is not found in these records.

Today FMA is worldwide. We see Filipino martial arts featured in both local and international films, such as *Kamagong*, *Mano-Mano*, *The Bourne Identity series*, *Mission Impossible 3*, *The Hunted*, *The book of Eli* and many others. There are also a lot of instructional videos and numerous articles found on



Eskrima Knife Fighting

the internet and books written about these arts. FMA have now become one of the most in-demand and popular martial arts in the United States and Europe. We must give thanks to the likes of Dan Inosanto, Antonio Diego, Mark Wiley, The Dog Brothers, Leo Gaje, Bobby Taboada, Edgar Sulite, Christopher Ricketts and others who have popularized the arts by exposing them to the public through seminars, instructional videos, magazines and books.

It should be noted that personal histories, or rather “stories,” by many FMA masters and practitioners, are often made up and are not always trustworthy since most of the claims regarding the origin of their art are often shrouded in mysteries such as masters who dreamt of being taught by enchanted spirits, and others who traveled many treacherous mountains and learned their skills either through a beautiful blind princess or a hermit in a cave. These stories are quite amusing, but at the same time often ridiculous and unbelievable. Thanks to authors like Mark Wiley who have made a thorough investigation of the history of the Filipino martial arts that we have now a scholarly study of the subject. His book *Filipino Martial Culture* is a good reference that dispelled much of these “myths” surrounding the origin and development of FMA. We also have other good sources which come from Filipino authors and masters of the art like Rey Galang, the late Edgar Sulite among a few others.

WEAPONS AND TRAINING METHODS

There are many weapons and training methods used in the study and practice of Filipino martial arts. Here is a brief description of some of them.

Solo Baston, or single stick, is a form of fighting in which an eskrimador uses a stick measuring about 20-30 inches in length, with a diameter of an inch.

The free hand is used for parrying, striking and snatching the weapon away from the enemy.

Doble baston, or double sticks, refers to the use of wielding two equal length sticks. It is very beautiful to look at when performed by a skillful eskrimador. Another term for the movements used for wielding two sticks is called sinawali.

Espada y daga, or sword and dagger, is a form which uses a sword and a dagger and is assumed to have gotten its influence from Spanish sword play during the Spanish occupation of the Philippines. It is called punta y daga in Kalis Ilustrisimo, thus referring to the point of the sword which is used for thrusting and in coordination with the dagger as a secondary weapon.

Kutsilyo / baraw, or knife, is the form of using a knife for defense. The skills used by the Filipinos in wielding this weapon is highly regarded as a very practical and functional way of fighting with a knife. It also employs the handling of two knives. Abenir Kalis specializes in the use of a reverse grip hold of the knife, due to its stealthy nature, and is used in conjunction with punches, elbows, knees and kicks.

Mano-mano, or the empty hands, is a self-defense form which employs the use of punches, elbows, knees, kicks and grappling skills. Many do not know



Eskrima Espada y Daga Fighting



Eskrima Mano Mano Fighting

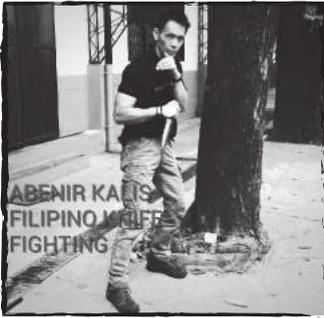
that this particular phase of Arnis, Escrima and Kali(s) is included in the curriculum; thinking instead that the art is purely weapons oriented. But the truth is that it is a complete fighting system where empty hand and weapons training are emphasized to help practitioners become well-rounded martial artists.

There are also fighting systems which are indigenous to the Philippines that do not emphasize the use of sticks or bladed weapons, such as Sikaran, Yaw-Yan, Dumog and others that are based solely on empty hand combat. Although they do have some training in weaponry, it is not their main focus.

The way of Filipino swordsmanship is geared towards combat efficiency and simplicity. But we practice it not with the concept of learning how to kill or to hurt people. We do this to promote our national identity and to inculcate love and respect for our country. It is also our means of expressing our human body through the movement and the ways of the sword to develop both physical strength and to sharpen our mental faculties. And we propagate this to preserve the beauty of our martial culture for the succeeding generations of Filipinos, including people from other nations.

CHAPTER 2

THE ABENIR KALIS SYSTEM



The Abenir Kalis system is primarily a blade based martial art which derives its bulk of techniques and fighting principles from the arts of Kalis Ilustrisimo, Yaw-Yan and Silat. The art's founder is this book's author, Maestro Bong Abenir, who has fused these systems in order to come up with his own training system. He has also added techniques and strategies discovered as effective during his live sparring. Most

of the techniques that were effective during a full sparring session without protective gear were thoroughly observed by him, to see whether their efficiency was replicated many times and would, therefore, be included as part of the repertoire of Abenir Kalis techniques. Abenir believes that during a fight, wherein everything is sudden and happening so fast, that you may not have time to think but must instead rely on your quick reaction to respond to any attack or situation you are in. What's more, the empty hand fighting system could be practiced anytime at any stage or level of the practitioner.

The weapons progression is used in conjunction with the empty hand training progression in order for the practitioner to get a "complete education" in the variables possible with the major techniques and tactics employed in Filipino martial arts. The major characteristic of Abenir Kalis is efficiency. It is a very pragmatic and practical system. It does not waste time with unnecessary movements but instead goes right through the heart of the problem when dealing with an adversary. We make sure



that the practitioner is able to fight or defend himself in just a few sessions of training within the system. Although it does not mean achieving mastery of the skills and techniques within the system in such a short period of time but rather the skill and confidence during a street encounter is what we are after (learn to fight first, then work on the finer points of the art later). That is why we do a lot of live drills during the first sessions and help the student analyze the different strategies and tactics that could be employed during a street fight. It does not matter much how well you execute the techniques during a fight as long they hit the target. People are not concerned with how beautiful or skillful you employ your techniques but rather with who is left standing after the encounter. Only after learning this comes the formal training for the purpose of mastery and teaching of the system. This is based on the following principles.



THE PRINCIPLES OF ABENIR KALIS

- ❖ Don't waste moves; be flexible.
- ❖ A parry which does not incorporate an attack is wasteful movement.
- ❖ A defense is an attack, an attack is a defense.
- ❖ Overwhelm your enemy with multiple attacks.
- ❖ Striking directly at the enemy's flesh is preferable to blocking the enemy's weapon.
- ❖ Your fighting position should be designed to make you a difficult target to hit.
- ❖ Don't be overconfident; be alert at all times.
- ❖ Be fiercer in your attack than your enemy.
- ❖ Be strong in your defense, and powerful in your offense.
- ❖ Move with speed and precision using correct distance against the enemy.
- ❖ The faster you hit the target, the better.
- ❖ Hit the nearest targets and those open to you.
- ❖ Attack when you see an opening.
- ❖ Employ your defensive skills when needed.
- ❖ Attack, attack, attack until the assailant ceases to be a threat to your safety.
- ❖ Hand techniques should correspond with footwork.
- ❖ Avoid wide movements in delivering your blows. Strike without telegraphing your attack.
- ❖ Wrist locks and disarming techniques are only incidental. A strike could cause a disarm that only counts as one beat which is faster and more practical to use than complicated locks during a heated encounter, especially against multiple opponents.
- ❖ Only engage in a fight if no other option of escape is possible.
- ❖ Run if you must, fight if you must, whatever you do, do it decisively and quickly.



CHAPTER 3

PRELIMINARIES

DIRECTLY SIMPLE AND SIMPLY DIRECT

If the objective is to learn the true art of Filipino Eskrima then everything should be done in a simple and direct manner in order to be truly combative and become very efficient in doing it. But the thing is, most people would rather study a system that has a lot of flowery and complicated movements. It's embedded in the human psyche to be drawn and be attracted to things that are seemingly magical rather than what is supposed to be real and natural. I sometimes also tend to do that but before I get lost in this state I would somehow awaken myself in order to get back to our system's true principle and philosophy. That is to approach combat the way we should. DIRECTLY SIMPLE and SIMPLY DIRECT.

ALIVENESS AND SPARRING

An old martial arts teacher told me that sparring is of no real value in actual combat because it has nothing much to do with what a thug or criminal would do in a real situation, and on and on he went trying to convince me of his





views. Well I never believed him and continued to be an advocate of what I refer to as “aliveness,” which means that you go duke it out with your sparring partner and see what works and what fails during a quasi-combat encounter. That means that you get hit and he gets hit and both suddenly realize that you sometimes go

home with a bruise here and there and it feels good. Although I believe that sparring is not the only tool you could use for practicing your skills, I really do believe it to be an essential part of martial arts training. Sparring teaches you a lot about timing, being able to read your opponent’s mind and countering his attack, when and how to attack effectively, knowing and exploiting your opponent’s strength and weaknesses and knowing yours as well. It also helps you to understand and feel pain when you get hit and what it means to fight under pressure.

I was once in U.P. Diliman with one of the instructors of AK Mr. Rommel Ramirez and we were there to demonstrate what our system was all about. Of course there were other groups too who were invited to demonstrate. I got so tired of seeing techniques being done over and over in a pre-arranged setting while everybody was intently watching these people. I really had nothing against them and I do respect their arts but when it comes to demonstrating what my system is all about then I would have to really show it. So after a few words of introduction I then instructed my friend to go live! Well we did stick sparring, knife sparring and hand to hand without any armor or protective gear and I got hit, my student got hit we were both getting black and blue lumps all over..... everybody was silent. We ended up laughing. That’s ALIVENESS folks!

STICK AND KNIFE FIGHTING ARE DIFFERENT THINGS

I have heard a lot of old-timers in Filipino martial art circle says that learning how to use the stick will automatically give you the ability to translate it’s techniques into knife work or whatever impact or edged weapon you are

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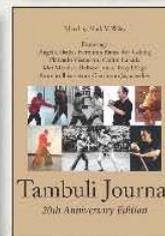
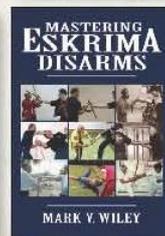
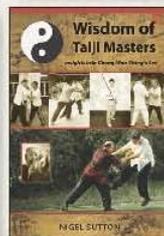
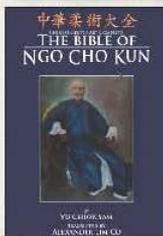
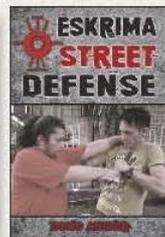
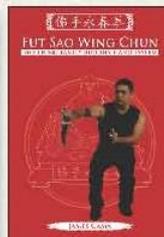
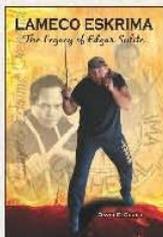
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Tambuli is the name of a native instrument in the Philippines fashioned from the horn of a carabao. The tambuli was blown and its sound signaled to villagers that a meeting with village elders was to be in session, or to announce the news of the day. It is hoped that Tambuli Media publications will “bring people together and disseminate the knowledge” to many.



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