

SB Edge Survival

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WARAY WARRIOR DANCE

Arnis was widely practiced among the natives of Samar before the coming of the Spaniards. Out of the movements of arnis they evolved the eskrima, a martial arts which does away with the wooden sticks used in arnis and instead utilizes bladed weapons, such as bolo or sundang (a longer bolo but not really a sword) or kris. Contemporary usage tends to identify the eskrima as fencing, but this is a very rough approximation of the meaning of the term. Eskrima has several movements. It is not confined to thrust and parry. Among the ancient Waray eskrima demanded also the use of the shields.

With the coming of the Spaniards the practice of these martial arts declined, although some old folks in Samar can still execute the eskrima very well. The reason for the decline of the practice may be the inapplicability of bladed weapons of sticks as weapons of defense against guns and cannons. The use of gunpowder, no doubt, rendered wood or bladed weapons obsolete. Consequently the martial arts associated with these materials also became obsolescent.

Of course the Waray did not completely do away with the use of bladed weapons. In the recorded rebellions they waged against the Spaniards their weapons usually consisted of bolos and sharpened sticks, but these were used for ambush or fast attacks.

Having no more validity for battle, the eskrima and arnis became tolerated as art. The complicated movements of these martial arts as they are executed now may have been additions as they began more to approximate the dance and became mere spectacle.

The sinulog is essentially a warrior dance. Its main appeal is spectacle-the duel to the death between warriors. Its conception of the fight is formal, starting with simple measures and developing into the complex. The rhythm of the movements increases as the fight nears a climax. The warriors use kris or sundang and wooden shields. The duel is executed as a kind of dance; movements are repeated and then develop toward a climax and finale-like movements is a sonata or ballet.

A development of the sinulog is the relatively more recent spectacle of the moro-moro, which is an expanded art form, having a definite narrative element-namely, the triumph of Christians over Muslims. It is therefore closer to drama than the original sinulog, which has the dance as its main element.

From its didactic narrative the moro-moro constructs the conflict: the war between Christians and Muslims. The sinulog, i.e., the warrior dance-becomes framed within the narrative of the moro-moro and provides the action and spectacle.fh

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