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Note: In this issue we will reprint, of course with permission, selected portions of the FMAdigest Special Sikaran Edition, published in 2009.

In 2011, the FMAdigest ceased publication after several years. It was the first internet publication dedicated to Filipino martial arts and Filipino culture.

From the FMAdigest Publishers Desk
Kamusta

It was an honor and privilege to meet Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo and Master Jaime Geronimo and some of the senior students of Sikaran while in the Philippines. In addition, I truly have to thank Emmanuel Querubin, known to friends as Emmy.

Though Grandmaster Geronimo had a stroke a while back, he still has the dynamic personality and is constantly building strength physically.

Visiting Grandmaster Geronimo at his home was an experience, seeing the history of Sikaran all around his home. I even had the privilege to see his student’s roster, which he has kept since he became Grandmaster of Sikaran. There were quite a few eye-opening entries of past students.

In this Special Edition Emmanuel Querubin shares some of the history of Sikaran. Emmanuel Querubin was appointed as the recorder by Grandmaster Geronimo to document the history of Sikaran and Grandmaster Geronimo. In addition, he did an excellent job in doing so. His book is a “Must-Have” if you really want to know about the true history of Sikaran, plus the concept and Philosophy.

It is satisfying to see senior students that have been with Grandmaster Geronimo and Sikaran, still dedicated and promoting the art. In addition, the Organization continues to grow and prosper even today and one can see that it will most definitely continue on into the future.

Sikaran has dealt with the changes of the martial arts throughout the years and has adapted to today’s knowledge and skills demanded of a martial artist. Yet it has kept its values and professionalism of the original art of Sikaran.

Well let me shut-up so you can read and enjoy the art of Sikaran.

Maraming Salamat Po

All Articles By: Emmanuel del Espiritu Santo Querubin
Photo’s Courtesy of: Emmanuel del Espiritu Santo Querubin

Sikaran Taliba© is published by the World Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines. It is the only internet magazine dedicated to the Sikaran practitioners around the world. The ideas and opinions in the articles and manuscripts are those of the author / contributor and not necessarily the views of the publisher or the editors. The Sikaran Taliba is not a forum for grievance. The management reserves the right to edit contributed materials for derogatory remarks and disparaging comments. All materials are the exclusive property of the author and cannot be reproduced in any manner without the written permission of the author. Neither the world Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines nor the management of Sikaran Taliba assumes any responsibility in the misuse or abuse of all techniques in this newspaper.
All fighting arts have one common beginning. Defensive and offensive techniques were all born of man's natural reflex actions. Dictated by the need for a means to defend oneself, these reflexive actions were developed into techniques and then to systems of fighting. This instinctive common origin explains the similarity of the different fighting systems.

The Filipino fighting arts, a higher-level physical manifestation of pure survival instinct, have a parallel but independent origin from arts of other countries and have a history that dates back before the Spanish colonization of the Philippines that started in 1521.

Scholars and historians suggested that what are now the Philippines has a history that goes back to 900 A.D. This came about with the discovery in 1989 of an artifact made of copper with Baybayin or Tagalog character on it and is now known as the Laguna Copperplate Inscription. This discovery confirmed that the Filipinos had a written language, long before the coming of the Spaniards and can therefore rightfully push back the history by at least another 600 plus years.

Questions were asked, however, why there is no written history of the country, much less the fighting arts. Dr. H. Otle Beyer, prominent anthropologist and scientist (Tekkites and Moon Stones) who made Philippines his home and married a native princess from the Mountain Province, in a book entitled “The Philippines before Magellan” wrote that “an overzealous Spanish friar boasted of having destroyed more than 300 scrolls written in the native character”. It is possible that the Christian Spaniards tried to eradicate all traces of pre-Hispanic history because of their disdain for Philippine culture, which was based on paganism.

The history of Filipino fighting arts, both armed and unarmed, and the existence of schools where these arts were taught was mentioned, albeit too briefly, by the Spaniard Pigafetta in his chronicles of the exploits of Ferdinand Magellan. Word of mouth, which was passed on by the masters to their students and down the line to the present, filled in the missing parts to make up a loosely, sometimes even iffy, systematically passed on to the proletariat of the country.

The Filipino fighting arts, both armed and unarmed, have a history that dates back before the Spanish colonization of the Philippines, and even before the arrival of early traders. The Sino-Japanese traders brought the fighting art of Koons Tao, Bersilat (shortened to Silat), an Indo Malay art of Arabic origin, found its way to the country at about the same time and the same manner. In Mindanao, sometimes the arts were referred to in the active form as Kuntawan and Silatan. Both Koon-tao and Silat were a mixture of armed and unarmed techniques. These arts further influenced and enriched the native arts of fighting.

Centuries before the Europeans were even aware of the existence of the island chain, later to be known as Philippines, the inhabitants were already adept in the combative arts, both armed and unarmed.

With the widespread Spanish domination of the Philippines, training in the armed fighting arts was banned. Possession of blades, customarily used for fighting, such as the kalis, kampilan, bangkantuli, barong and other curved blades, were strictly prohibited. However, possession of limited types of implements used for food preparation such as the strung straight edge itak or gukol was allowed with strict restrictions.

The confiscation and outlawing of weapons created a fertile environment for the development and propagation of Sikaran. The “Spanish authorities” viewed Sikaran as a pastime, using the empty hands and the bare feet rather than an armed system of fighting.

In the predominantly Muslim section of the country, in the island of Mindanao, the art of Silat continued to flourish as a secret form of combat exclusive to the royalty and virtually did not undergo any change.

Fanned by the trade winds, the art of Koontao found its way to the other trading centers around the country and was passed on to the proletariat of the country, disguised more as a pastime than a fighting system. Koontao greatly influenced the native system of Buno and Sikaran. Buno, a native form of wrestling, placed emphasis on the use of the hands and was popular among the fishermen of the coastal towns in the Visayan region. Sikaran, a foot-fighting system was popular among farmers of the big island of Luzon, particularly the province of Rizal.

This division was brought about by physiological and geographical influences. Fishermen, because of the very nature of their occupation, have greater upper body strength and therefore favored a physical activity that utilizes more upper body strength. Farmers, due to their more developed lower body, favored foot-fighting maneuvers. Buno, was never elevated into a formalized art. It became accepted more as a pastime rather than a sport or art. Interestingly, however, most Filipino wrestlers have their start from Buno. Another vernacular term for Buno is Dumog or Barog. However, Sikaran followed a different path. Using the bare hands and the feet, it adopted the striking, parrying, blocking, and disarming techniques of Arnis de Mano and adding them to the off-balancing techniques of Koontao, Sikaran became a formalized unarmed fighting system. However, Sikaran, unlike Arnis de Mano, was not used in an organized manner of fighting the occupying forces of the Spaniards, the Americans, and the Japanese. Sikaran, being an empty hand system of fighting developed by farmers, was utilized more for personal defense. On the other hand, Arnis de Mano was developed by warriors for warfare.

The Spanish authorities, armed with muskets and swords, did not consider Sikaran a threat because it was an unarmed system.

In the early 1900’s, the art of Ju-jitsu was introduced by the Japanese military class, who started infiltrating the Philippines as part of Japan’s long-term plan of the Asian Co-prosperity Sphere. The art was Pilipinized and the term ditso became part of the Filipino language.

Having also been developed from natural reflex action, Ju- jitsu techniques had similarity with the two Filipino fighting systems; Arnis de Mano, the armed system of fighting and Sikaran, the unarmed system of fighting.

Sikaran is a fighting art developed by farmers for their own personal defense as a last resort. Farmers, having well-developed legs, favored leg techniques and emphasized the use of the feet. They developed kicking techniques that were given descriptive and colorful names, such as biyakid (spinning heel kick), sipang kabayo (horse kick), padyak ng kalabaw (carabao stamp), salpok ng bulik (jumping strike of a fighting cock), and dagit ng agila (an eagle swooping down on a prey).

Sikaran is a term derived from sikad (kick). In the active form of the Tagalog language, when the consonant is between two vowels the D is replaced with R, hence the term Sikaran. The term was used because the system relied heavily on using the feet for kicking. However, maneuvers using the hands for striking, joint reversals, takedowns and throws are much a part of Sikaran as kicking.

In recent times, Sikaran contested and competitions in the olden days, the use of hand techniques is limited to blocks and parries. This led to the mistaken notion that Sikaran only uses the feet. This erroneous idea was brought about by the emphasis on foot techniques by the Hari’s (champions) of old. However, in self-defense applications, there are no rules, except to survive and win the fight, the hands are used extensively and form an integral part of Sikaran.

In Sikaran as an art of self-defense, the hands are used extensively for thrusting, punching, and striking. The hands are also used for takedowns and throwing. However, the use of the hands as an initial attack in Sikaran is not very common. A Sikaran fighter normally attacks with his legs, his fingers, and hands, are used mostly as a follow-up to leg techniques or as a continuation of block techniques.

Sikaran, as a sport enjoyed its golden age in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. In the 1920’s, Sikaran went into a decline. Exposure to western sports and culture brought new interests. Younger men moved away leaving only the older men to carry on the tradition of the system. When the Philippines were...
drawn in the war against Japan, several Masters of Sikaran who were also masters of Arnis de Mano joined the guerilla movement in defense of the Philippines. The hostilities further decimated the already dwindling number of Sikaran practitioners.

After the Second World War, the Filipinos were busy rebuilding their lives. American culture was replacing the Spanish and Japanese influences. Even in far Southern Tagalog Region, baseball was replacing the fighting arts. In the Visayan Region (Central Philippines), western boxing became the craze. Even now, most boxing champions come from the Visayan region.

The onslaught of foreign domination in the psyche of the Filipino was such that the only place where Sikaran was still practiced was the town of Baras in the province of Rizal.

Present Day Sikaran

Sikaran was becoming obsolescent had it not been with the seeming intervention of divine providence.

Sikaran Masters and practitioners, out of patriotism and love of adventure joined the resistance and almost all became statistical part of the Second World War. It was probably only because it was a part of a grand plan that three of the survivors of the Second World War were Cipriano Geronimo, Melencio Bigasin and Manuel Ocampo, all Sikaran Hari’s of the 1930’s.

Cipriano Geronimo came from a long line of Hari’s and was the son of Hari ng mga Hari (Champion of Champions) Bonifacio Geronimo. Bonifacio Geronimo was said to have killed a carabaao with a single byakid. Pedro Castaneda, a contemporary of Geronimo, was said to have performed the same incredible feat. Another feat attributed to Bonifacio Geronimo, was his ability to break a coconut with a byakid. A coconut will be thrown up in the air and Geronimo will jump up and with a byakid break the coconut in half while in mid-air. Both feats, however, were passed on by word of mouth and cannot be confirmed by an eyewitness. Meliton Geronimo, however, had exceeded the latter feat. Instead of coconuts, he kicked and broke concrete tiles and blocks.

However, the fact that Bonifacio Geronimo passed away unbeaten was attested to by his son Cipriano Geronimo and former Sikaran Hari’s Manuel Ocampo and Melencio Bigasin. It was a tradition in Filipino fighting arts to pass on his skill to a chosen successor and so it was with Bonifacio to Cipriano. It was only natural that Cipriano passed on his skill in Sikaran to his son Meliton Geronimo.

At a very young age, Meliton Geronimo displayed exceptional fortitude and courage by serving with distinction in the resistance movement with the Marking Guerillas during the Second World War.

In 1958, I met Meliton Geronimo and learned about Sikaran. Intrigued about the art I undertook a search for other practitioners as part of my duties as Director for Research and Standards of the Kapapiang Sikaran Pilipinas. After a painstaking search that took me up as far north as Batanes and as far south as Jolo, I ended back up in the town of Baras in the province of Rizal, hotbed of Sikaran. There I met octogenarians Cipriano Geronimo, Manuel Ocampo, and Melencio Bigasin, all survivors of the Second World War and at one time Hari in Sikaran.

Further search for more Sikaran Masters or teachers proved fruitless. I was convinced that Cipriano Geronimo, Manuel Ocampo and Melencio Bigasin were the last three legitimate masters. However, I met practitioners in the towns of Baras, Morong and Tanay, who trained in Sikaran at one time or another, but for one reason or another have not attained the status of Hari and therefore were not considered valid and legitimate teachers who can pass on Sikaran. Some of these were Aurelio Cabacob, Angeles Pilapil, and Serrillano Javier.

Cipriano Geronimo, Manuel Ocampo and Melencio Bigasin, who at one time were all Hari, were determined to resurrect the interest in Sikaran. They found a protegé in Meliton Geronimo, elder son of Cipriano Geronimo.

The six Sikaranistas showed me Sikaran techniques. Even in their advanced age, they were still spry and full of fighting energy. The tales they told bordered the realm of exaggeration and fiction.

Manuel Ocampo also known as Maning Kabayo (Manuel the horse) claims to have downed a carabaao (water buffalo) with a single sipang kabayo (back thrust heel kick) to the head. Melencio Bigasin, who in his fighting days was known as lulod na bakal (shin of steel) showed me scars on his shin, which he claims, were marks of the many coconut husks that he broke with his shin. A coconut will be thrown up in the air and Bigasin will jump and with a DambANG sipa-kot (jumping roundhouse kick) break the coconut with his shin in mid-air. Bigasin attributes this remarkable skill to his predecessor Alfonso Tesoro.

Cipriano Geronimo, known as Agila (Eagle) a moniker he shared with Perfecto Ballesteros, claims to be able to jump and kick the hat off the head of a person standing on the back of a carabaao.

Although such feats seem too incredible to believe, especially in their twilight years and unable to perform such feats, I have no choice but to believe them after learning how they trained. Having seen Meliton Geronimo and his younger brother Jaime Geronimo fly, I have no doubt that their father did what he claims he did.

Born on March 10, 1927, Meliton Geronimo is a man for all seasons. Aside from being Grand master of Sikaran, Geronimo is a military man, a movie actor and a politician.

In the 1950’s Meliton Geronimo, already a budding Master of Sikaran and non-commissioned officer in the Philippine Air Force, was sent to Japan and the United States as part of the Reparations Treaty Contingent from the Philippine Air Force. While in Japan, he met and became good friends with Master Koichi Kondo of the All Japan Karate Association. Due to his skill in Sikaran, Meliton Geronimo, made black belt in Karate in a very short time. While in the United States, he was called Chief Geronimo, (the Native American chief of the infamous Little Bighorn massacre of George Custer and his troop) as a sign of awe and respect because of his fighting prowess.

Karate was gaining popularity, not only in the Philippines but in the whole world as well. In order for Sikaran to gain international acceptance, Geronimo found it advisable to use the subtitle Philippine Karate in reference to Sikaran.

Geronimo also realized that to gain recognition, it was expedient to make adjustments and modernize his approach to the practice of Sikaran.

Sikaran of old was a pure, exciting and effective fighting system. Techniques, both offensive and defensive were executed exactly how they were used in actual fighting. There are no “hidden techniques” concealed in Balangkas or pre-arranged patterns or formal exercises. There were no formal exercises needed to advance in rank or standing. In fact, there was no ranking or grading system in Sikaran. However, there were four classifications: Hari (champion), Guro (teacher), manlalaro (player), and nagaaral (student). Manlalaro (player) and nagaaral (student) may be used interchangeably and most of the time synonymously.

A Hari (champion) may also be a Guro (teacher), but a Guro (teacher) is not necessarily a Hari (champion).

Geronimo taught his students who do not fight regularly to become a champion, so as not to risk being injured preventing them from performing their regular occupations. There are also players who do not fight regularly to become a champion for one reason or another. Then there are those who are willing to demonstrate their feat of strength or skill but not fight.

Unless and until one becomes a Hari (champion) one is not taken seriously as a Sikaran fighter.

Geronimo sens and the Filipinos’ indifference and apathy to rituals and ceremonial, which they always associate with religion, carried over to Sikaran, hence the lack of formal exercises or pre-arranged patterns. To make adjustments for purposes of International competition, Geronimo adopted the required choreographed formal exercises from Japan and Korea. However, to retain the distinctive origin of Sikaran, he also created and developed Sikaran’s own personalizational balangkas or formal exercises.

He instituted the curriculum of Sikaran the Batayang Balangkas (Basic form), the Balangkas ng kampana (4-Direction pattern), the intermediate forms which were called Panila-langkas or
Meliton Geronimo, now a captain of Sikaran as a distinct Filipino fighting art, named it as survival of the fittest kind of empty-hand fighting art. It was his first international competition and the first honor for the Philippines in the field of empty-hand fighting. It also proved the flexibility and ability of Sikaran practitioners to adapt to different fight situations under a different set of rules of engagement.

In 1968, Jimmy Geronimo, younger brother of Meliton Geronimo, won a similar award as Most Courageous Fighter, during the 5th Asian Karate Championship held in Seoul, Korea. In subsequent Asian Karate Championships, several other honors were won under the leadership of Meliton Geronimo.

Working with Meliton Geronimo and his younger brother Jaime Geronimo, with encouragement and wisdom of Sikaran Hari’s Cipriano Geronimo, Melencio Bigas and Manuel Ocampo and Arnis de Mano Grandmaster Daniel Rendal, Emmanuel del Espiritu Santo Querubin, formalized the techniques, terminology and teaching curriculum of Sikaran.

Meliton Geronimo’s skill in Sikaran paid off when he was named Most Courageous Fighter. It was his first international competition and the first honor for the Philippines in the field of empty-hand fighting. It also proved the flexibility and ability of Sikaran practitioners to adapt to different fight situations under a different set of rules of engagement.

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In 1969 the Institute of National Language and the Department of Education approved the Filipino terminology prepared by Meliton Geronimo and Emmanuel Querubin, bolstering the identity of Sikaran as an indigenous empty-hand fighting art of the Philippines.

From 1969 to 1972, Meliton Geronimo and his senior instructors, Jimmy Geronimo, Emmanuel del Espiritu Santo Querubin, Angeles Sanchez, Rodrigo Espiritu, Ramon Valdenor and Serafin Pangilinan, were assigned to train Republic of the Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos and the Presidential Security Command in Sikaran.

In 1970, the Asian Karate Association was disbanded to give way to the creation of the World Union of Karate-do Organizations (WUKO). The Philippines, ably represented by Meliton Geronimo and Emmanuel del Espiritu Santo Querubin, became signatory members as Kapapirang Sikaran ng Pilipinas.

Shortly thereafter, Meliton Geronimo relinquished his position in the World Union of Karate-do Organizations and devoted all his time and energy in the propagation of Sikaran, which he propelled to its rightful place in the international martial arts scene and is now practiced in several countries in at least four continents.

After retiring from the Philippine Air Force, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, Meliton Geronimo was elected Mayor of the town of Baras in the province of Rizal. As Mayor, his first official action was to acknowledge Baras as the birthplace of Sikaran. A similar resolution was also passed by the provincial government of the province of Rizal.

Geronimo also erected a monument of two Sikaran practitioners in a biyakid position, adjacent to the multi-purpose gymnasium that he also constructed to be home of Sikaran.

Sikaran and Meliton Geronimo are synonymous and nobody can rightfully claim to have learned the art unless they learned it from Meliton Geronimo or his students. Unfortunately, many unsuspecting people are being bilked by self-proclaimed grandmasters and masters, who after hearing about Sikaran, cleverly put together some hand and foot techniques and call their system Sikaran.

Meliton Geronimo, still actively oversees the affairs of the Kapapirang Sikaran ng Pilipinas.
(ruling body of Sikaran) and the Pandaigdigan Kapatiran Sikaran ng Pilipinas (World Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines), comprised of several affiliates from all over the world.

With Meliton Geronimo at the head, his two most senior instructors stand by his side. Jimmy “Kano” Geronimo, his younger brother and second in command and a master in his own right attend to the technical affairs of Sikaran as an international sport and Emmanuel del Espiritu Santo Querubin, continue to research, innovate, propagate and chronicle Sikaran as a fighting art.

There is only one Grandmaster of Sikaran and that is Meliton Geronimo. There is also only one 10th Degree Red Belt sanctioned and recognized by the original Asian Karate Association and that is Meliton Geronimo.

Grandmaster Meliton C. Geronimo had revolutionized the whole attitude towards the Red Belt. He partook in the exhausting and grueling training of his protégés.

Master Jaime Geronimo
9th Degree Black Belt #14
Chief Instructor and Examiner

Jaime Geronimo, also known as “Kano,” because he was born during the American Liberation of the Philippines, is the younger son of Cipriano Geronimo, last Sikaran Hari of Baras, Rizal. He is currently the Chief Instructor and Examiner of the Pandaigdigan Kapatiran Sikaran ng Pilipinas. At 9th Degree Black Belt, Jaime Geronimo is the only person on whom the title “Master” has been bestowed by Sikaran Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo.

In 1968, Jaime Geronimo competed and was awarded the “Most Courageous Fighter” during the 5th Asian Karate Championships in Seoul, Korea.

From 1969 to 1972, Jaime was a member of the Sikaran team, headed by Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo, who taught Sikaran to the Presidential Security Command. While in Malacanang he was commissioned and became the personal aide of General Singson of the Philippine Air Force.

When the Philippine National Police was formed, Jimmy was absorbed into the force where he retired after an illustrious career as a SWAT officer.

His professional career did not deter him from the practice of Sikaran. No matter how busy his schedule may be, he never fails to put in at least 2 hours of training everyday to keep him in top shape. After his retirement from the Philippine National Police he spends hours teaching beginners and training advance students to become Sikaran teachers and tournament officials. He has visited several countries where he conducted seminars and workshops in the different Sikaran affiliates.

Through his initiative the Pandaigdigan Kapatiran Sikaran ng Pilipinas has established a mountain site Sikaran Training Center (where most of the BBC’s Last Man Standing series was filmed) and a beachside Sikaran Training Center along the shores of Laguna de Bay.
FMAdigest: In your opinion what makes your Filipino martial art style different from other Filipino martial arts styles?
Jaime Geronimo: Sikaran is different because it is traditionally Filipino. Among the many so called Filipino Martial Arts Sikaran is the only martial art with a history that goes back to the 1500’s. Sikaran was developed by farmers while engaged in their work in the fields. They strengthened their legs doing fieldwork. To while away their time, they developed the “kicking game” which was a contest of strength using the legs for kicking and the hands for blocking. Sikaran’s techniques are adaptable. Our style can adjust to the challenges and compete under different rules of engagement. For example in the 60’s we adjusted and competed against Karate and competed in the Asian and World Karate tournaments.

FMAdigest: In your opinion what is a Master?
Jaime Geronimo: A Master must have trained his mind and his body, competed in tournaments, and must have proven to be the best. No matter what age, whether young or old, a Master must prove himself constantly.

FMAdigest: In your opinion what is a Grandmaster?
Jaime Geronimo: The Grandmaster is the highest authority in a particular art or style. There must only be one Grandmaster. Aside from his mental and physical capability, the Grandmaster must have developed and propagated his particular martial art. In Sikaran there is only one Grandmaster. He is Supremo Meliton Geronimo, 10th Degree Black Belt.

FMAdigest: What do you think of styles that use titles such as Great Grandmaster, Supreme Grandmaster? And since this has become a title which is being used, do you think the next step is something like Ultimate, Supreme Great Grandmaster?
Jaime Geronimo: In my opinion Supreme Grandmaster Great Grandmaster and Ultimate Supreme Great Grandmaster do not mean anything except as a title. The more important thing is who gave them the title. What have they done to deserve the title? How good are they in their art or style? Many of these so-called Grandmasters promoted themselves and assumed the title. Some grandmasters exchanged promotions and called each other grandmaster. In Sikaran there is only one Grandmaster, Supremo Meliton Geronimo, and one Master.

I have been promoted to Sikaran Master by Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo, with the rank of 9th Degree Black Belt and Chief Instructor of the Kapangutan Sikaran ng Pilipinas. I am the next in line as successor of our Supremo Meliton Geronimo 10th Degree Black Belt. My duties as Chief Instructor are to upgrade the skill of the members, standardize the teaching of Sikaran, and organize the different branches throughout the world. There is now a house bill in Congress to recognize Sikaran as the National Filipino martial arts. When approved, maybe that would bring together all the Sikaran schools under one strong organization under the leadership of Meliton Geronimo, the only legitimate Grandmaster of Sikaran.

FMAdigest: What would you say to people that are claiming to be Sikaran? There are practitioners in the United States that are claiming they are the Grandmaster or the Hari of Sikaran?
Jaime Geronimo: There are some students or practitioners who come to Baras to train a little or even just attend a workshop and when they return to where ever they come from they claim to teach Sikaran and say that Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo recognizes them. There is even an expelled member who claims to be a Hari, not knowing that Hari is a title that must be won in the battlefield of combat and cannot be passed on, not even by Grandmaster Melton Geronimo (laugh). There are some who train for a few months or a few years and think they are good and unbeatable. They assume high grade belts and think they are good and unbeatable. They assume high grade belts and think they are good and unbeatable. They assume high grade belts and think they are good and unbeatable. They assume high grade belts and think they are good and unbeatable. They assume high grade belts and think they are good and unbeatable.

In 1962, Vic Laxamana, 8th Degree Black Belt (left) and Jaime Geronimo, 9th Degree Black Belt (right) posed for the photograph, which is now the logo of the Pandadigdigan Kapatiran Sikaran ng Pilipinas.

The FMAdigest was honored to be able to talk with Sikaran Master Jaime Geronimo, 9th Degree Black Belt; brother of Grandmaster Geronimo.

In the picture above, Emmanuel Querubin, 9th Degree Black Belt, is seen sitting next to Vic Laxamana, 8th Degree Black Belt. Ramon Valdenor and Vic Laxamana are the Grandmaster's closest friends. When their two styles were combined, it was born the Sikaran style.

In 2008, the group held a great reunion that was marked by the launch of a book entitled Sikaran Mantas: The First Book of Sikaran.

In 2008, Sikaran students and practitioners in the United States, led by Emmanuel Querubin, presented a petition to Congress recognizing Sikaran as a legitimate martial art style.

Sikaran Seniors Pay Homage to Grandmaster Melton Geronimo

Emmanuel Querubin led Sikaran Mantas (seniors) in paying homage to Grandmaster Melton Geronimo who is still suffering physically but mentally.

Grandmaster Melton Geronimo (sitting)
Standing from L-R: Ramon Valdenor (8th Degree Black Belt), Vic Laxamana (8th Degree Black Belt), Emmanuel Querubin (9th Degree Black Belt), Joe Sidlacan (8th Degree Black Belt) and Rodrigo Espiritu (8th Degree Black Belt)

Geronimo, 9th Degree Black Belt, also a part of the instructional team (not in the picture above), is now the Chief Instructor of the Pandadigdigan Kapatiran Sikaran ng Pilipinas (World Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines).
Ramon Valdenor
8th Degree Black Belt #513

After his stint as Sikaran Instructor at the Presidential Security Command, Ramon Valdenor became an agent of the City of Manila’s Civil Intelligence and Security Unit (CISU), a branch of the National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA). He later became the personal aide of Press Secretary Francisco Tatad, later turned Senator. Valdenor stayed with Tatad until the latter quit political life.

Victor Laxamana
8th Degree Black Belt #144

Vic, as he is fondly called, is known as “Sikaran’s Man with the Steel hands.” Standing 5’7” and tipping the scale at less than 110 pounds, Vic set an association record smashing 13 concrete tiles with a knife-hand strike, thrusting through a 20-pound watermelon with his spear-hand and other feats of strength. He is currently teaching at Don Bosco in Makati and travels around the country officiating in tournaments and giving seminars to prospective instructors and officials.

Vic Laxamana was once Coordinating Director of the Kapatiran Sikaran ng Pilipinas. A Textile Engineer by education, Vic has spent almost half a century in training and teaching the martial arts.

Ramon Valdenor receiving Award from President Ferdinand Marcos as Sikaran Instructor of the Presidential Security Command

Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo with Ramon Valdenor
8th Degree Black Belt

Ramon Valdenor

Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo with Victor Laxamana
8th Degree Black Belt

Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo with Victor Laxamana
8th Degree Black Belt

Vic Laxamana has won the Gold Medal in the breaking competition for 5 straight years until he voluntarily quit competing

Sipakot ng Bilogan
Balangkas ng Baras
Hampas sa Lupa

Vic Laxamana (back turned to camera) exchanging kicks with his student Christian Gloria
Aside from being a professor in criminology, and one time Kapitirang Sikaran ng Pilipinas Director for Educational Institutions, Joe also has a master’s degree in Physical Education. He has written several books in Corrections and Penology, which is now, required textbook in several criminology colleges. He retired from the Philippine College of Criminology after 44 years of teaching Criminalistics and Combative Arts.

He was also Physical Education Instructor at the Feati University where he led the Swimming Team in their first ever-Gold Medal in the Manila Universities’ Swimming Competition.

In 1978 to 1991 he was a Probation Officer and at the same time was also an instructor at the Philippine National Police Academy in Tagaytay City.

Retirement did not go well with Joe so he went back to teaching Criminal Justice System, Forensics, Corrections, and Penology at the Philippine National Police Academy and is working towards a second career in Criminology at the Cavite State University.

Aside from an 8th Degree Black Belt in Sikaran, Joe also holds a 3rd Degree Black Belt in Kodokan Judo and an Instructor’s Certificate in Arnis de Mano from Filemon Canete’s Doce Pares School and the Viray’s School of Pamapanga Brokil.

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In 2006, Rodrigo Espiritu retired from the Philippine Navy with the rank of Chief Petty Officer. A Naval Intelligence Officer, Rodrigo was the team leader of the Philippine Navy Sikaran Team. He has won several medals and trophies in tournaments in and out of the service. The first one was Greater Manila Regional champion in 1968. He is presently a faculty member at the University of Taguig in Rizal, when he is not traveling giving seminars and workshops around the country.

An alumnus of the National College of Physical Education, Rodrigo is a graduate of several professional courses while in the Philippine Navy, including the Non-Commissioned Officers Academy and Naval Intelligence Academy.
It was not until the middle of the 20th century that the door to the male oriented and male dominated world of the martial arts in the Philippines was opened to the "other gender," Gabriela Silang being an exception rather than the rule. American liberation, freed not only the country from foreign aggression, but also “liberated” the Filipina from the traditional “no-touch Maria Clara” mystique. It also changed the Filipino perception of equality.

The male controlled Kapatirang Sikaran ng Pilipinas (Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines) was no exception. Among the several female Sikaran practitioners, there were three standouts, Gloria Rapsing, Norma Gonzales, and Warlita Jorda. Aside from being charming and good looking they were also deadly. Their instructor, Jimmy Geronimo made it a point that they do not get special preference on account of their gender.

However, Norma Gonzales dropped out of Sikaran early to pursue the more feminine endeavor of keeping house.

Gloria Rapsing and Warlita Jorda stayed on until they reached second-degree black belt, attained a status of prominence in Sikaran, before they too finally succumbed to the maternal instinct of raising a family.

**Gloria Rapsing**

2nd Degree Black Belt #97

1968 Greater Manila Regional Champion

**Warlita Jorda**

2nd Degree Black Belt #96

In 1968, Warlita joined the Banco Filipino all women branch in Cubao, Quezon City. Aware of her special skill in the arts of self-defense, Warlita became an instant hit and novelty in the bank. The Associated Press picked up this news-worthy scoop which made Warlita an instant banking star and was published in various newspapers, including The Bangkok Post of Thailand, Singapore’s Green Streak, The Yomiuri of Japan, the United States’ Pacific Star and Stripes, in addition to the mainstream newspapers of the Philippines, like the Manila Times and the Daily Mirror.
The dictionary defines greatness as the virtue of being eminent, distinguished, illustrious superior and having the nobility of mind and purpose. In my over 50 years in the martial arts, I can unequivocally say that I have never met anybody, more qualified and worthy than these two gentlemen, who I will classify as the two greatest men in the Filipino martial arts.

Nature, always finds a way for great minds and great men to cross path, sometimes by design and sometimes by chance.

On Monday, March 23, 2009, the two greatest men in the Filipino martial arts finally met. Both men have known of each other but have never met in person. A luncheon appointment was arranged between Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo of Sikaran (which he was not able to make) and Steven Dowd, Publisher of Filipino Martial Arts Digest.

Steven Dowd, in his magnanimity, took the initiative to motor to Antipolo City to meet Meliton Geronimo who was still suffering the after-effects of a stroke.

Geronimo at 82 years of age came from a long line of Filipino Sikaran Masters. Steven Dowd, whose claim to Filipino- hood are his mastery of the Filipino fighting arts and his lovely Filipina wife Vicky, on the other hand is an American who learned the Filipino martial arts while with the United States Navy stationed in the Philippines in the 1970’s.

Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo and Tagapagpamana Steven Dowd although as opposite as night and day are bonded by the same desire, dedication and commitment in the development, preservation and propagation of the Filipino martial arts.

Meliton Geronimo through the Pandaigdigang Kapatirang Sikaran ng Pilipinas (World Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines) is making the Filipino art of foot-fighting known all over the world. Steven Dowd through the FMAdigest brought to the world the Philippines and the Filipino martial arts. The Filipino Martial Arts Digest or simply FMAdigest is an internet magazine in the wide world of the web. It was one of the only internet magazines exclusively dedicated to the Filipino martial arts and everything culturally Filipino.
The Dagat ng Agila (flying sidekick) is the favorite Sikaran technique of Meliton Geronimo, which he inherited from his father Cipriano Geronimo, also known as "Agila."

Better late than never, last Sikaran Hari Cipriano Geronimo receives certificate of recognition from the personal envoy of Rizal Province Governor Isidro Rodriguez, for his contribution in the advancement preservation and propagation of Sikaran Melencio Bigasin (to Geronimo's right) and Manuel Ocampo (to Geronimo's left). Likewise were honored after this picture was taken, Melencio Bigasin and Manuel Ocampo passed away in their early nineties. Cipriano Geronimo lived to be over 100 years old.

allowed the use the subtitle Philippine Karate in reference to Sikaran. He also realized that to gain recognition, it was essential to make adjustments and modernize his approach to the practice of Sikaran, at the same time preserving the authenticity and identity of the art.

Sikaran was a pure and effective fighting system. Techniques, both offensive and defensive were executed exactly as they were used in actual fighting. There were no "hidden techniques" or "hidden applications" concealed in Balangkas or pre-arranged patterns or formal exercises. There were no Balangkas (pre-arranged forms or drills) to allow one to train alone against imaginary opponent or opponents. There were no formal exercises needed to advance in rank or standing. Training consisted mainly of rudimentary but exciting actual exchange of blows with a partner.

Filipinos' indifferences and apathy to rituals and ceremonials, which they always associate with religion, carried over to Sikaran, hence the lack of formal exercises or pre-arranged patterns.

Understanding this need, Geronimo, following the example of Korea, adopted the required choreographed formal exercises from Japan for purposes of international competition. However, to retain the distinctive origin of Sikaran Geronimo also created and developed Sikaran's own personalized formal exercises, again following the example of Korea.

There are five classifications of Balangkas (patterns) in Sikaran. The first is the Batayang Balangkas (Basic Pattern). The second is the Balangkas ng Kampana (Pattern of the Bell or 4-direction pattern). The third is the intermediate pattern or Pani-langkas. The fourth is the progressive pattern or Mau-langkas more popularly known as the Balangkas ng Sikaran. The fifth is the Balangkas na Banyaga (foreign forms).

The Balangkas na Banyaga are forms or patterns of foreign origin given Filipino names and were essential at the time when Sikaran was still referred to as Philippine Karate for acceptance in the Asian Karate Association. Presently, although some Balangkas na Banyaga is still practiced, they are now optional.

Part of this adjustment was adopting other techniques, such as other stances and blocks. Ranking and belt system as well as official white attire, salutation and other protocols were also made part in the modern practice of Sikaran.

Meliton Geronimo's systematizing and organizing the techniques of Sikaran effectively elevated Sikaran from a "foot-fighting system" to the "fighting art of the Filipino farmer."

While a non-commissioned officer, in the Philippine Air Force, Meliton Geronimo started teaching military personnel and their dependents the Filipino fighting arts of Sikaran and Arnis de mano. They formed the Eagle Karate (Sikaran) Club, made up of Philippine Air Force personnel. After the civilian dependents of the PAF joined the club, the name Eagle Karate (Sikaran) Club was retained but the PAF servicemen put up their own group and to distinguish it as a purely military club they called it the Blue Diamond Karate (Sikaran) Club in honor of the acrobatic flying team of the Philippine Air Force.

Upon learning of the existence of this club, several civilians sought instructions from Meliton Geronimo. Since most civilian members have no access to the military base, it was decided to rent a building outside the base to serve as headquarters and central gymnasium. In 1958 the group was renamed the Karate (Sikaran) Brotherhood of the Philippines.

In 1960, Geronimo communicated with Master Koichi Kondo of the All Japan Karate Federation in an effort to join and have the Asian Karate Association recognize Sikaran as a distinct empty-hand fighting art of Filipino origin. On February 8, 1961, affixing his seal on his response, Master Koichi Kondo acknowledged Geronimo's letter. Again, on May 5, 1961, Master Koichi
Kondo sent a hand written re-
response from Korea, to Meliton
Geronimo.

In 1962, Master Koichi
Kondo, Chief Instructor of the All
Japan Karate Federation, as a
prelude for recognition of Sikaran
as a distinct Filipino empty-hand
fighting art named Meliton
Geronimo, now a captain in the
Philippine Air Force, Japanese
Karate Grades Commissioner for
the Philippines. In recognition of
his skill, Meliton Geronimo was
awarded the 5th Degree black
belt by Kyojiro Furusawa, presi-
dent of the All Japan Karate
Federation. It was at that time,
the highest grade in Karate
awarded to a non-Japanese. The
highest grade in Karate was
honored by the All Japan Karate
Association and eventually by the
Asian Karate Association. Although
it took a while, on March 6, 1963, Master Koichi
Kondo confirmed his support for
Meliton Geronimo and the Karate
(Sikaran) Brotherhood of the
Philippines for membership in
the Asian Karate Association and
extended an invitation for the
Philippines to participate in the
First Asian Karate Championship.

In an attempt to make it a
regular part of the Asian Games, a
uniform name for the sport was
necessary. All member countries
agreed to use the collective name
of Asian Karate Association.

In 1964, Meliton Geroni-
mo led a team of Sikaran players
in the First Asian Karate Cham-
pionships held in Japan. It was the first
time that Japanese Karate, Chinese
Karate, Korean Tang Soo Do,
danced Korean Karate and
Sikaran referred to as Philippine
Karate, competed in an interna-
tional tournament using a stan-
dard uniform rule of contest. The
rules were almost made-to-order
for Sikaran fighters. They were the
matria ang matibay (knock-
out-survival-of-the-fittest) kind of
rules, the forte of Sikaran. How-
ever, there was a twist. Full-body
protective gear was used, the first
time Filipinos were introduced to
the practice.

Meliton Geronimo’s skill in Sikaran
paid off when he was named
“Most Courageous Fighter.” It was
his first international competi-
tion and the first honor for the
Philippines in the martial art field
of empty-hand fighting. It also
proved the flexibility and ability
of Sikaran practitioners to adapt
different fight situations under
a different set of rules of engage-
ment.

In subsequent Asian Ka-
rate Championships, several other
honors (including 7 gold medals)
were won under the leadership
of Meliton Geronimo.

In the Fifth Asian Karate
Championships held in Seoul,
Korea, Jaime Geronimo, younger
brother of Meliton Geronimo,
won the “Most Courageous
Fighter Award.”

Some people were insis-
tent on calling the art Philippine
Karate professing that it has been
influenced too much by Karate.
Some contend that it should be
called Modern Sikaran to differ-
entiate it with ancient Sikaran,
because foreign but similar fight-
ing arts have debauched its dis-
tinctive style. Meliton Geronimo,
maintaining that this is neither a
new nor a different art, but a
natural evolutionary progress-
on of the centuries-old art of
Sikaran, resisted to use a qualifier
and retained the name of the art
the way it has always been since
the 1800’s. It may have seemed
an insignificant matter to some,
but to Meliton Geronimo, it looms
large on the horizon of the future
of Sikaran. He strongly declared
that the art of Sikaran that he is
propagating is the same art his
grandfather propagated in the
1800’s. He emphatically stressed
that nobody can improve on per-
fection of the centuries-old art of
Sikaran He emphasized that what
he improved on is the “packaging”
and “presentation” of Sikaran.

In recognition of this
achievement, the Philippine
Sportswriters Association granted
on Meliton Geronimo the Sports-
man of the Year Award.

A second recognition of Sikaran in an ancient system
to a modern fighting art was
awarded to the title of Grandmaster
of Sikaran with the rank of 10th
Degree Red Belt. He was vested
the Order of the Eagle (Agila),
the highest award in the Asian Karate
Association.

On the Third Asian Karate
Championship in 1966, held in
the Philippines, Sikaran was ac-
cepted as a distinct Filipino style of
fighting, by the Asian Karate
Association headed by Korea’s
Dr. Kwai Byung Yun, with the
concurrence of Master Koichi
Kondo of the All Japan Karate
Federation, Master Hwang Kee
of the Korean Tang Soo Do and
China’s Master Chua Tiong Ki.
Af-
ter several centuries of existence,
Sikaran was finally accorded
international acceptance and rec-
ignon. This once in a lifetime
was witnessed by Philip-
pine Senator Ambrosio Padilla,
Antonio delas Alas, president of
the Philippine Amateur Athletic
Federation, Colonel Jose Lukban,
president of the Philippine Ama-
teur Judo Association and several
high-ranking military officers.

Also in attendance were Cipriano
Geronimo, last Hari of Baras
and several Sikaran elders from Baras
and surrounding towns, headed by
Melencio Bigasian and Manuel
Ocampo. The Order of the Eagle,
highest award in the Asian Karate
Association.

In 1969, Meliton Geroni-
mo and Emmanuel del Espiritu
Santo Querubin’s Terminologies
of the Filipino Fighting Arts re-
cieved the approval of the Insti-
tute of National Language and
the Department of Education,
bolstering the identity of Sikaran
as an indigenous empty-hand
fighting art of the Philippines.

In the same year, Meli-
ton Geronimo and Emmanuel
Querubin published two Sikaran
Instructional Manuals.

From 1969 to 1972, Meli-
ton Geronimo and his senior
instructors, Jaime Geronimo, Em-
manuel del Espiritu Santo Quer-
ubin, Angeles Sanchez, Rodrigo
Espiritu, Ramon Valdenor and
Sergio Angilinan, were assigned
to train Republic of the Philip-
ines President Ferdinand Marcos
and the Presidential Security
Command in Sikaran.

In 1970, the Asian Karate
Association was disbanded to
give way to the creation of the
World Union of Karate-do Orga-
nizations (WUKO) the ruling body
of Karate in the world. It was
unfortunate that Master Koichi
Kondo was no longer around
to witness the culmination of
his dream. Master Koichi Kondo
passed away prematurely in 1969.
The Sikaran (Karate) Brotherhood
of the Philippines became an
original signatory member when
Meliton Geronimo and Emmanuel
del Espiritu Santo Querubin
were designated lifetime founding
signers of the WUKO charter.

Meliton Geronimo, has
gained worldwide recognition
as a martial arts leader, and the
Philippines, through the Sikaran
Brotherhood of the Philip-
lines, has emerged as a power-
house in the international Karate
scene. This personal glory was
brothered for Meliton Geroni-
mo. With the formation of WUKO,
Sikaran was being identified too
much as Karate instead of the dis-
inct Filipino Fighting Art that it
is. Apprehensive that Sikaran may
lose its identity over the interna-
tional acceptance of Philippine
Karate, Meliton Geronimo, shortly
thereafter relinquished his posi-
tion in the World Union of Karate-
do Organizations (WUKO).

Energized by the enthusi-
asm of the Sikaran elders, Meliton
Geronimo devoted all his time
and energy in the propagation of
Sikaran. Sacrificing his per-
sonal stature as a pacesetter in
the Karate world, he dropped all
references to Sikaran in his
Karate and propelled the Filipino
Fighting Art to its rightful place
in the international martial arts
scene. Adopting the ancient rules
of Sikaran competition, Meliton
Geronimo set tournament pro-
tocol making Sikaran a modern
and exciting competitive sport.
Sikaran is now practiced in several
countries in at least four conti-
nents and is universally recog-
nized as the Filipino Martial Art
that it is.
After retiring from the Philippine Air Force, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, Meliton Geronimo was elected Mayor of the town of Baras in the province of Rizal. His first official action as Mayor was to acknowledge Baras as the birthplace of Sikaran. A similar resolution was also passed by the provincial government of the province of Rizal. Geronimo also erected a monument of two Sikaran fighters in a biyakid position, adjacent to the multi-purpose gymnasium that he also constructed to be home of Sikaran.

Sikaran and Meliton Geronimo are synonymous and nobody can rightfully claim to have learned the art unless they learned it from Meliton Geronimo or his disciples. Unfortunately, unsuspecting people are being bilked by self-proclaimed "Masters" and even "Grandmasters," who after hearing about Sikaran, cleverly put together some hand and foot techniques and call their art Sikaran.

Meliton Geronimo, still actively oversees the affairs of Kapatirang Sikaran ng Pilipinas (ruling body of Sikaran) and the Pandaigdigang Kapitirang Sikaran (World Brotherhood of Sikaran), comprised of several affiliates from all over the world.

With Meliton Geronimo at the head, his two most senior and ardent followers stand by his side. Jaime Geronimo, his younger brother and second in command and a master in his own right, attends to the technical affairs of Sikaran as an international sport and is now the Chief Instructor of the Pandaigdigang Kapitirang Sikaran (World Sikaran Brotherhood). Emmanuel del Espiritu Santo Querubin, now based in the United States, continues to propagate Sikaran as a fighting art and has just published "Sikaran, Fighting Art of the Filipino Farmer."

Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo at 80 years old leads the training by the shore of Laguna de Bay

Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo (bare chested back turned to camera) leads black belt class

Mayor Meliton “Latigo” Geronimo with President Fidel Ramos.

An Interview with Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo

FMAdigest: In your opinion what makes your Filipino Martial Arts style different from other Filipino martial arts style?
Meliton Geronimo: My martial art style is called Sikaran. Technically, there are only two Filipino martial arts styles: The unarmed martial arts style is Sikaran and the armed martial arts style is Arnis de Mano. In my opinion these are the only two original and authentic Filipino martial arts that are as old as the country itself. These martial arts existed even before the Spaniards came. What we now call Arnis de Mano has been known under various names such as Kali, Eskrima, Estokada and others. Sikaran, on the other hand has always just been called Sikaran. It is an art of fighting that emphasizes the use of the feet. It also uses the hands for striking, throwing and takedowns.

In competition, however, the hands are used only for blocking and only kicking techniques are allowed.

FMAdigest: What makes your style unique or different from other styles?
Meliton Geronimo: Sikaran is a martial arts with a history that is as old as the country. This in itself makes it unique. Karate compared to Sikaran is just an infant art. Sikaran was developed in the Philippines, making it a truly Filipino art and different from the other unarmed fighting styles.

FMAdigest: What makes the Filipino martial arts in general different from other martial arts throughout the world?
Meliton Geronimo: Martial arts around the world, whether armed or unarmed are similar in the sense that they were all developed to defend against a hostile force or threat. There may be superficial similarities in techniques and maneuvers because they all have a similar purpose - self-preservation. However, the similarity ends there. Filipino martial arts are homegrown and born in the Philippines guided by the Filipino's character and culture.

FMAdigest: In your opinion, what is a Master?
Meliton Geronimo: A Master is a person who has achieved exceptional ability both mentally and physically in all the aspects of the particular art. Additionally, a person must have contributed in the development and propagation of the art. In Sikaran, the title master is vested only by the grandmaster. Physical expertise alone is not enough for a person to be bestowed the title “Master.” Naming of a master takes a great deal of thinking and consideration because a master is next in line in being the Grandmaster.

FMAdigest: What do you think of styles that use such titles as Great Grandmaster, Supreme Grandmaster? In addition, since this has become a title, which is being used, do you think the next step is something like “Ultimate Supreme Great Grandmaster”?
Meliton Geronimo: People being people, they will try to outdo

What makes the Filipino martial arts a Master? Does it qualify a person to be called a master? In Sikaran, I have only given the title of master to one person, Jaime Geronimo, 9th Degree Black Belt Chief Instructor.
each other in every which way they can. I do not waste any time in titles and ranks. I have been called by different titles by different people. People who knew me as a military officer call me by my rank, which is “Lieutenant Colonel.” People who knew me as a politician call me “Mayor.” People who knew me as a movie actor call me by my alias “Tatig.” Some members of Sikaran call me “Supremo.” Do not mistake this word for supreme being (God). In Filipino “Supremo” means leader or head of a group. Andres Bonifacio, leader of the Katipunan was called Supremo (highest rank or leader in the Katipunan). Luis Taruc was called Supremo as the leader of the infamous Hukbalahap (Hukbo ng bayan laban sa hapon). I am called Sikaran Supremo because I am the leader and the highest authority in Sikaran.

FMA digest: Personally what do you think of the state of the Filipino martial arts today and what do you think would bring the Filipino martial arts to greater recognition throughout the world?

Meliton Geronimo: I can only talk about Sikaran. There are several Sikaran schools in the Philippines and all over the world, some are legitimate and some are not. Almost all the legitimate schools are affiliated with the Panaigdigang Kapapirang Sikaran ng Pilipinas (World Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines). We are trying to get all schools who claim to be teaching Sikaran to affiliate with us and take advantage of training, legitimizing, and upgrading their skill in Sikaran. We have training facilities in Baras, Rizal for this purpose. Your magazine is in a very advantageous position to fulfill this dream.

In the national level, there is presently a bill in congress (that has passed the first reading) authored by Congresswoman Adelina Rodriguez Zaldriaga naming Sikaran the National Martial Art of the Philippines sent a bill in the senate (to go on the first reading) prepared by Jessie Rocales, Chief of Staff of Senator Lito Lapid, making Sikaran a mandatory Physical Education curriculum and providing the necessary funding for its implementation by the Department of Education.

FMA digest: There are a lot of different Organizations, Federations, Associations, etc. in the Filipino martial arts, of course personal ones like LESKAS, Modern Arnis, LASI, Serrada, Illustrisimo, Doce Pares to name just a few, then there are organizations which are made up of the different organizations such as National Filipino martial arts, Philippine Counsel of Kali, Eskrima, Amis Masters), etc. Do you ever think the Filipino martial arts will come under just one banner?

Meliton Geronimo: There is only one legitimate Sikaran Organization and that is the Panaigdigang Kapapirang Sikaran ng Pilipinas (World Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines). Any other group claiming to be a Sikaran Organization, which is not affiliated with the Panaigdigang Kapapirang Sikaran ng Pilipinas is fraudulent. I have heard about other people claiming to be Masters, even Grandmasters of Sikaran. You can check their credentials and you will find out they are dubious. The practice of Sikaran as it is known today started in the 1950’s in Baras, Rizal, under my leadership. In 1958 the Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines was formed.

The Panaigdigang Kapapirang Sikaran ng Pilipinas has a master roster of every member of the World Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines from the day it was established. If you check you will see that some of these people claiming to be Masters and Grandmasters were at one time our student but were expelled for one reason or another, but mainly for conduct unbecoming. Then there are those who take advantage of people’s gullibility and to validate whatever they are teaching call it Sikaran. As far as Amis de Mano is concerned, President Ray Velayo must take the initiative to bring together all the Amis groups under the banner of Amis Philippines.

FMA digest: Now it seems that some of the Filipino martial arts are claiming to become a hybrid art. What is the reason or your feeling of this?

Meliton Geronimo: Most who are claiming that theirs is a hybrid art are those whose art do not have an authentic and legitimate origin. Their art has no verifiable source and that is why they say they “combine” the different arts into a hybrid art. Sikaran is a complete art. As an art of fighting, kicks are emphasized because the legs are more powerful and have a longer reach. However, the hands are also used for striking and thrusting. Submission techniques, takedowns and throws are all part of Sikaran. In contests and competitions, however, there are rules prohibiting certain techniques for the sake of safety. If you practice an authentic and complete fighting art, such as Sikaran, and you do it well, you will not have to practice a “hybrid” art.
He is the son of Grandmaster Meliton C. Geronimo and the third generation heir to the Geronimo Sikaran lineage. He came from the line of Sikaran haris. His Grandfather, Cipriano Geronimo was the last Hari of Baras, Rizal. His Great-grandfather Bonifacio Geronimo, was the last Hari ng mga Hari. Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo has issued a Legal Declaration, naming his son Administrative Head of the World Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines, when he steps down as President.

Mantas Meliton S. Geronimo, Jr., assisted by Master Jaime C. Geronimo, Mantas Emmanuel es Querubin, Mantas Danilo Chu, and Mantas Elpidio Seletaria are now in the process of completing and editing the official textbook of the World Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines for use in the World Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines Teacher’s Academy. The book, based on the teachings of Grandmaster Meliton C. Geronimo, is expected to be officially launched on March 10, 2013 during the celebration of the Grandmaster’s 86 birthday.

This Sikaran Academy will be held in conjunction with the Province of Rizal Ordinance 002, s2010, which reads:

**An Ordinance**

Declaring Sikaran as the Provincial Sport, Providing Mechanism and Programs For Its Preservation And Promotion, Appropriating the Necessary Funds Therefore, and for Other Purposes

The primary purpose of the Sikaran Academy is to upgrade, standardize and develop the learning and teaching of Sikaran.

In 1969, two Sikaran Instructor’s Manuals were published. However, the scope of these manuals was very limited. Manual No. 1 was the translation of English to Filipino commands in teaching Sikaran. These terminologies were used since 1958 but was approved for general usage by the Institute of National Language, Department of Education only in 1969.

Manual No. 2 dealt with the general information of Sikaran stances and blocks and one balangkas or formal exercise. It was not until 2009 when the first authoritative book in Sikaran, entitled ‘Sikaran, The Fighting Art of the Filipino Farmer” was published. The book presented the history and techniques of Sikaran. In 2011 an Instructional Manual in DVD format was released for distribution. In 2012, the second book, entitled ‘Original Balangkas of Sikaran” was published, dealing with the original formal exercises developed in the 1950’s and 1960’s.

The lack of visual aid resulted in several instructors developing their own formal exercises without valid connection to Sikaran.

With an established Academy, it will be possible to standardize and upgrade the teaching and learning of Sikaran. Likewise it will professionalize a Sikaran teacher and be able to receive a Certificate of Completion that may lead to a legitimate Teaching Credential that will be honored by foreign governments, enabling a Sikaran Teacher to open up a Sikaran School in a foreign country.

The International Coordinator is now checking with Immigration officials in the United States to determine how the Sikaran Academy graduates may be eligible to come to the US under Temporary Visa P-1, Artists and Athletes Visas.

**Regional Director Arnold Turia**
Sikaran Regional Chapter of Ireland
Mount Charles, County of Donegal
Republic of Ireland

**Regional Director Armie Esparcia Delos Santos**
Sikaran Regional Chapter of Italy
Milan, Italy

**WORLD SIKARAN BROTHERHOOD OF THE PHILIPPINES**

**SECOND U.S.A. ANNUAL SIKARAN GATHERING**

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