

A Sinawali of Folklore, “History”, and Personal Narrative in Arnis

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This paper weaves folklore, historical narratives, and the author’s personal experience as an Arnis practitioner. The study aimed to present possible folklore materials shared in the Arnis community that the author identified during his years of training with this martial art. However, this paper does not claim to represent all Arnis styles, to provide a summary of all folklore materials in Arnis, nor to answer debates about the history of the art. This paper highlights the author’s experiences and reflections regarding the intersections of martial art, folklore, history, and personal narratives.

Likewise, this paper attempts to show personal narratives as part of folklore both as a type of folk story as well as a method to transmit and sustain folklore in the Arnis community. To further adhere to this theme, autoethnography is utilized to present personal experiences. The analytic type of autoethnography was specifically used to contextualize personal narrative with the Arnis community and further address the reliability of the story. The analytic type of autoethnography also provided a means to present personal narratives as folklore following the characterization that folk stories must come from various sources in the group, creating a sense of shared experience.

From this autoethnographic exploration, the author highlighted several aspects of Arnis training as a source of folklore. First is the historical narrative of the origins and the development of Arnis and the second is the actual training of Arnis itself.

Keywords: *Arnis, folklore, autoethnography, personal narrative, martial art, history*



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“Sinawali” in the Filipino Martial Art of Arnis refers to a *doble baston* or double stick drill that copies the pattern of weaving split-bamboo mats. This paper is therefore an attempt to weave folklore, history, and my personal experience as an Arnis practitioner. History in the title has quotation marks as some of the claims may not be part of official national or local history or might not have any additional evidence for corroboration if subjected to a more rigorous historical study.

Folklore here does not necessarily pertain to supernatural or fictional stories. Folklore, for the purposes of this introductory paragraph, pertains to the traditional knowledge as well as the process of passing said traditional knowledge in a community (Madden, 2019). There are various categories of folklore but the most common would be the “verbal lore” which include fairy tales, legends or myths that may present themselves as historical, songs, proverbs, jokes, among others (Madden, 2019, p. 12; McNeill, 2013). Further, this paper presents personal narrative as part of folklore transmission, continuation, and perhaps even innovation thus autoethnography was also tested and employed as a method to present folklore.

Disclaimers seem appropriate at this point since other practitioners might have other experiences or perceptions of their experiences as well as how to write about Arnis. First, this article is not about addressing debates about the origins, history, styles, or techniques in Arnis. Second, the folklore discussion does not pose to be an all-encompassing enumeration or summary of all the folklore-related materials in Arnis. Lastly, the stories are classified as folklore depending on the definition of folklore from related literature of folklore studies which will be discussed later, as well as my perspective as a social scientist because some alleged historical narratives were long debunked in anthropology or history for example.

In the initial draft of this paper, I acknowledged that I was trying to do a lot of things in one essay. I was attempting to explore a way of presenting or writing articles for folklore studies. There was also the endeavor to help define and redefine folklore in relation to oral tradition, personal stories, tradition and innovation, and embodiment of folklore through physical training and kinetic movements. To slowly transition from oral to kinetic ideas of folklore, there was a mixture of various forms of folk narratives in Arnis based on my personal experiences and comparing it with other sources. Then there was that effort to explore the idea of embodiment of folklore in terms of physical training and performing aspects of Arnis. So, it was admittedly ambitious as well as too complicated as was also noted by the reviewers.

In this version, the paper aims to present some folklore materials that I have encountered while practicing and studying the Filipino Martial Art of Arnis. I tried to focus only on personal narrative presented through the analytical type of autoethnography and sample folklore related to the history and training of Arnis.

By following said objectives and autoethnographic format, it is also my intention that the readers will be able to reconsider the following ideas. First, that folklore materials can be found not only in mainly oral performance or written texts but also in other contexts. They may still take on the oral or written form, but they can be interwoven with the teaching of other performed cultural expressions. Second is for the Arnis community to further explore and research on its rich tradition not only in relation to folklore but also those that connect to history, life stories, migrant narratives, gender concerns, and other possible topics.

Lastly, this is also a consideration of personal narratives or autoethnography as part of sharing and sustaining folklore traditions as well as presenting folklore studies. Using the analytical type of autoethnography also provides the personal

experience a shared context with other practitioners thus it can also be utilized by those who do not prefer or are not comfortable focusing only on one's personal life.

The following sections were arranged to tackle folklore and folklore studies, autoethnography, and the presentation and discussion of the data.

Folklore

Madden (2019) mentioned several categories of folklore such as material lore, customary lore, and verbal lore. Most definitions and focus of folklore studies however were predominantly anchored in oral tradition (Ben-Amos, 1971; Ben-Amos, 2014; Hernandez, 2021; Propp, 1997; Velcic, 1989).

Nevertheless, folklorists have also continued to debate and investigate the various definitions and classifications of folklore such as questioning what is tradition, what is folk, or what is lore (McNeill, 2013)? There also seems to be a reconfiguration of definitions against a perception of an unchanging culture that remains to be original as much as possible but looking into the role and relation of innovation to what is deemed traditional (Jacobs, 1893, in Bronner 2017).

For example, scholars argued that folklore can take a form on its own in relation to other cultural expressions and be transmitted or even adapted to various contexts of people (Ben-Amos, 1971). Stahl (1977) also posited that what we deem as traditional or folklore depends on how well a storyteller delivers the material, as well as how the audience perceive that version in relation to their idea of what the folklore should be. Thus, the individual may further enhance the narrative, or the folklore itself could have mechanisms to encourage personal creativity and innovation (Stahl, 1977).

By considering these dynamics between the group and the individual, innovations then must be acknowledged as actual parts of tradition. But such innovations are done through the process of taking ideas from what is deemed traditional, and then creating something seemingly new yet still grounded in the past (Hernandez, 2021; Stahl, 1977).

And it seems that the process of sharing the folklore plays into such dynamics of folklore. As also mentioned in the introduction, folklore is both the material as well as the method by which it is shared (Madden, 2019).

McNeill (2013) explained that one of the features of sharing folklore is that it comes from a variety of sources in the group or community in contrast to say pop culture that comes from an identifiable single source. Folklore therefore seems to have that communal and "since time immemorial" feeling but also allows itself to have various versions due to its different sources.

Ben-Amos (2014) for example focused on communication as folklore's main characteristic. Communication in this sense was further expanded to include visual and kinetic or "in motion and in performance" (Ben-Amos, 2014, p. 17). By including motion and performance, then we must consider the whole physical body as a tool for sharing folklore.

Folkdances would be an obvious example though some may prefer putting them in a different category. The argument here however is that folkdances are not just mere movements or performances but also embodiments of culture and history (Mendoza, 1998, Pusnik, 2010).

As mentioned in the introduction, the original paper attempted to discuss the embodiment of folklore as the physical body and kinetic motions were argued to also transmit folklore and traditional knowledge such as in folkdances. However, this revised version had to limit itself for now to the sharing of verbal folklore and

the discussion of personal narratives as part of folklore. Personal narratives such as diaries and family anecdotes are considered as a type or at least source of folklore though researchers tend to locate first the narrative's connection or rootedness to the community's experience and lore (Stahl, 1977; Velcic, 1989; Nguyen, et al., 2012).

With such definitions of the communal communication process of folklore, and with the reiteration of locating the personal within the wider context of a community's folklore, the use of analytic ethnography is further justified.

Autoethnography

First, I would like to present select definitions of autoethnography before I address what autoethnography means to me as a writer and researcher.

Autoethnography as a qualitative method focuses on sharing and examining the author's personal experiences, thoughts, and emotions in relation to various aspects of their social context (Ellis, et al., 2011; Kelley, 2014; Ghita, 2019). It combines personal reflection and scientific writing through adherence to ethnography which could translate to either a formal paper or a more literary narrative depending on the preference of the author (Ellis, et al., 2011; Denshire, 2014; Kelley, 2014; Ghita, 2019).

It is described as highly relational in character as the researcher selects significant memories and changes in their lives then subjects these personal narratives into analysis or even criticism to further understand their social and cultural context (Denshire, 2014; Ellis, et al, 2011). Neville-Jan (2003) also emphasized that autoethnographic narratives are not conclusions but rather

continuous stories offering insights and intimate humanity to abstract concepts or theories.

There are two general types of autoethnography. First is the evocative which focuses more on the experience of the teller, how they make sense of their experience, and probably share to a larger audience the narratives that may only occur to a certain group of people (Denshire, 2014; Kelley, 2014; Loo, 2017). The second one is analytical which aims to relate the personal narrative to other sources, compare similarities and differences of one's personal experience to others, and probably close the gap between the personal experience and the social group or community (Denshire, 2014; Kelley, 2014; Loo, 2017).

The validity of the autoethnography depends on how it connects with the readers as well as the collective experience of the group the writer relates to (Ellis, et al., 2011; Kelley, 2014). Reliability on the other hand depends on the truth or even the likelihood that the author experienced the events they wrote about (Ellis, et al., 2011; Kelley, 2014).

These definitions and characteristics of autoethnography provide an excellent platform for the examination of personal narratives as part of folklore because of their similarities. Stahl (1977, p. 10) argued that to see the traditional in the personal, we must first view traditions as part of a "continuing time" instead of something bound in the past, as well as an entity related to various factors and processes.

As part of a continuing time, folklore can accommodate personal narratives that have occurred in recent memory (Stahl, 1977). But these personal narratives or innovations of the story must still be composed of "of traditional resources, artistry, and interpersonal contact" with the community (Stahl, 1977, p. 13). Despite the uniqueness of the personal experience, the narrative can still be

situated in a larger time frame and geographical context where the individual also draws from practices, beliefs, and values of their group (Stahl, 1977). As suggested, looking at personal narrative as folklore based on its connection to the collective tradition, then comparing it to the process of writing analytic autoethnography where one's experiences are related to the whole group, presents us with the possibility of using autoethnography in folklore to study personal narratives as folklore.

Having said so, I see autoethnography first as a way to express myself of the knowledge that I have experienced first-hand and relate it to others who might have the same experience. The researcher also has his/her own observations but in other research methods, s/he still needs others to talk about their own perspectives, focus on others' narratives, and might only interject his/her personal opinions and approach in the latter part of the study. Autoethnography enables the researcher's experience to be the focus of the research.

Being essentially a personal account, autoethnographies can also be observed to have various formats depending on the topic as well as the style of the writer. There are those who share their experience only at the beginning of their paper or would fully insert personal narratives throughout their study. Since this is also a qualitative research method, the personal narrative is subjected to reflection or analysis in relation to a concept, framework, or other sources. This is especially true for the analytic type of ethnography.

I want to emphasize that this paper is of the analytic type of ethnography as I also want to situate and analyze my personal narratives beside similar stories. This enables at least a presentation of personal narratives as part of continuing folklore and innovations which are still anchored in tradition. This is also my personal preference as I do not think I can write using the evocative type, and the topic and

approach of the paper might not also fit the said style. The data presentation therefore presented my personal point of view first before comparing it with narratives of other practitioners followed by a discussion.

For the narratives of other practitioners, I chose to explore published or shared documents and videos instead of conducting interviews. I think there are a lot of materials already being released by the Arnis community that might already need condensing or digesting in some form so we can see the intersections of these materials. Further, conducting interviews, even online ones, became a personal challenge due to the pandemic as well as my full-time work and study schedule.

Instead, I have selected several articles from the Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) Digest which is a journal for Arnis and other Filipino Martial Art practitioners first published in 2004, several books on Arnis such as the *Modern Arnis* by Grandmaster Remy Presas, and documentary films on Arnis specifically "Eskrimador" (2010), "The Bladed Hands: A Documentary on the Global Impact of the Filipino Martial Art" (2012), and "Rebirth of the Rebellion Sport" (2017). Note however that the FMA Digest is unlike our academic journals that sometimes there is a lack of pagination or even the full name of the authors of the articles. It is more of a more flexible compilation of stories from various willing contributors. However, I have only included articles which had the names of the authors as much as possible.

As for the choice and the number of selected articles, these are just samples in order to situate or relate my personal narratives to the community's folklore traditions. As mentioned, additional validity and reliability of autobiographies would come in part from the reader.

By using the analytic type of autoethnography and comparing my personal experiences to those of the other sources, I hoped to satisfy the idea of locating

personal narratives in a larger context of tradition in order for it to be considered to be a part of folklore transmission and innovation.

Personal Journey

I first read about Arnis in an old elementary P.E. book for public schools. For the patched-up copy that I had, the pages on Arnis were found near the end of the book. It consisted of the basic angles of attack and consisted of several terms used in Arnis such as, if my memory does not fail me, *abecedario*, *bublat araw* (or something with “araw” in it), and *payong*.

For some reason, I was fascinated by it that I tried to understand the descriptions of the techniques, imagine and experiment how the techniques were performed, and memorize what I thought was the movement. It was not taught in elementary and high school, and I did not know any Arnis club or teacher in our area. We also had no YouTube at that time or at least an access to it.

In my second and third year in high school there was some sort of martial arts fad especially among the males due to practice teachers assigned at our school who knew Taekwondo. A short-lived Karate-Taekwondo club was also formed in a nearby town which I later joined. Several of our classmates also bought and shared books about other martial arts and I remember buying “Modern Arnis: The Art of Stick Fighting” by Grandmaster Remy Presas. Again, I was only studying Arnis with the help of this book, but I had no practice partner because others were not interested in a weapons-based art, describing it as impractical as you do not always have a stick with you.

Some of the things I’ve learned from the said book is that Arnis is that Arnis was used by Lapulapu against the Spaniards, that it was taught in traditional

version of schools called "bothoan", that it had various names such as eskrima and kali, that Arnis is a blade-based art with the stick as a training tool in preparation to the use of a bladed weapon, that the Spaniards banned its practice thus the Filipinos incorporated it in dances and moro-moro plays, and that Arnis got its name from the Spanish word for "harness."

It was already around the middle of my fourth year in high school that I discovered a martial arts club in Candon City. It was the SIKADSU Arnis-Karatedo Club, but Arnis was only practiced during Sundays as a supplement weapons art for Karate. I trained for at least 6 months when schedule and budget permitted with said group before the club shutdown and transferred to another location and I had to go to Baguio for my undergraduate degree.

It was around my second year in college that I again trained in Arnis with the Modern Arnis Tapi-Tapi, one of the two Arnis clubs in YMCA Baguio. Here, one of our three teachers taught us that there are other blade or stick-based martial arts around the world, but that Arnis is still arguably Filipino in its development. Since there is also a sport side of our training, I was introduced to the standard Anyos of Modern Arnis as well as creative Anyos. Repetition of basic techniques and drills were important, sparring was conducted every now and then, and I was also introduced to the old rubber tires as an effective training dummy.

After college and transferring to Metro Manila for work, it took around two to three years again before I did train on a regular basis. I did try Lightning Scientific Arnis International (LSAI) at the University of the Philippines Diliman for one Saturday session, around four weekends with the Lapunti Arnis de Abanico also in Diliman but work and study schedules as I have also been doing my master or arts classes did not permit me to continue further. Rapido Realismo Kali and Kalis Ilustrisimo were also of interest but again, the schedule did not permit any training

with said groups. Most of my training by this point is simply reviewing what I have learned in Baguio, from what I read, and from what I study on YouTube, until I discovered a small group near where I was staying which also suits my schedule and budget.

So, I trained around two to three years with the KALAHI Filipino Martial Arts Group until I obtained by black belt per their ranking. The group also enabled me to reconnect with the Arnis community and again learn stories such as, but not limited to, the following:

1. The oldest form of the art was brought to the archipelago from the Sri Vijayan Empire by either traders, the ten Bornean datus, or the Malays during their migration.
2. That Arnis was also used by Rizal, the Katipuneros, and the Bolomen as well as Filipino Guerillas during World War II.
3. The idea that techniques can be transferred from one weapon to another, with a few modifications providing Arnis a unique empty-hand application thus you do not always need to carry a stick or weapon.
4. That Arnis does not have to have a single and linear history or narrative of development as other styles could have been created or adapted depending on the needs of certain communities.
5. Some Arnis practitioners and styles have also incorporated traditional Filipino healing arts, such as the hilot, as well as some magic such as the *anting-anting*.

In addition to having to train with other practitioners both within our group and occasionally from other clubs or styles, joining social media groups especially in Facebook also showed me how diverse the opinions and perspectives are to these

narratives. While there are people who adhere to these stories and experiences, there are also those who continue to ask questions and be critical to alleged historical narratives and folk tales shared among practitioners.

Due to my transfer to Los Baños as well as the change of the group’s venue, my training again became infrequent until the pandemic stopped our meetings. While we took a break especially during the first months of the pandemic as distance learning proved to be a challenge, I took up an online asynchronous course offered by the De Campo 1-2-3 Original.

Overall, my actual physical training with Arnis would be at least five years but my interest and journey with the art would be at least double that period.

Folklore and History

While self-defense and my fascination with Arnis as an art were the main motivations why I started Arnis, being with the community also exposed me to various stories especially in relation to the history of the art as well as the “secrets” in training.

As mentioned in the previous section, I learned that a historical narrative presenting Arnis as a bladed art originating from traders, *datus*, or migrants from ancient empires such as the Sri Vijaya and that it was initially banned by the Spaniards but the natives either trained in secret or creatively incorporated the fighting techniques in dances and plays. The prohibition of the Spaniards to carry weapons allegedly also led to the creation of a transparent barong Tagalog. Allegedly, the name Arnis also came from the Spanish word “harness” used to secure the weapon in mock plays.

National heroes like Lapulapu, Rizal, Bonifacio, and other Katipunan members were also said to be skilled in Arnis, and during World War II, Americans formed groups of Filipino “bolomen” to fight against the Japanese.

After the war, several Arnis practitioners allegedly fought each other in death matches called *juego todo* to test personal capabilities and to prove which style was the best. For some practitioners, amulets, charms, and the healing arts were also important aspects of their styles.

For some people or groups, such stories are real and make up the perceived history of their group if not the whole Arnis art and community. However, if we placed them under the rigors of scholarly scrutiny of history such as they should be able to provide various oral, written, and artifactual evidence, some stories could only be described as a legend or myth presented as history and is therefore a form of folklore.

Since analytic autoethnography and personal narratives as folklore should be situated in the stories of a personal group, I have also enumerated similar stories from sample sources to show that my personal narrative is also experienced by others in the community.

For example, in the books “The Filipino Martial Arts” by Dan Inosanto (1980), “Modern Arnis” by Grandmaster Remy Presas (1983), and “The Dan Anderson Encyclopedia of Modern Arnis Volume 1: A-1” by Dan Anderson (2016), all authors attempted to provide a concise history of Arnis. They mentioned the significance of migration and mixture of culture from Sri-Vishaya (Srivijaya) Empire, Majapahit Empire, Chinese, the Spaniards, and even the now-dismissed Wave of Migration due to lack of historical or archaeological proof was mentioned at least in the work of Inosanto (1980). Lapulapu was also frequently referred to as either a master of Arnis or an example where Arnis was first utilized against

colonizers. Then there is the attempt of the Spaniards to control Arnis so it changed from a blade art to sticks, then later on became blade oriented again during WWII.

FMA documentaries, specifically “Eskrimadors” by Kerwin Go (2010) and “The Bladed Hand” by Jay Ignacio (2012) also echoed the same narratives though they also focused on the contemporary history of the art. As Ignacio (2012) admitted in his documentary, the difficulty in having an accurate historical account for Arnis especially during the early Philippine period is the lack of historical documents or artifacts that can accurately portray the techniques or state the origins and evolution of the art as compared to the existence of European fencing treaties.

The contemporary history of Arnis however is laden with more oral traditions and written sources such as the *juego todo*, *anting-anting*, war experiences, and alleged personal encounters as highlighted by the abovementioned documentaries to pay tribute to the surviving grandmasters during filming. The following are just samples shared in “Eskrimadors” (Go, 2010). First is the story shared by Grandmaster Andres Cañete that his father had an *orasyon* or prayer for healing and would keep a cloth with the words with him for protection. Another is the separate stories of Grandmasters Anciong Bacon and Inting Carin surviving life threatening challenges and attacks.

It can be argued that the use of historical references, whether they are accurate or mixed with other forms of folklore, not only creates credibility for their styles but also that personal connection to one’s ancestors, values, and identity. Grandmaster Cacoy Cañete said that seeking and training with Arnis comes naturally if it is in your blood (Go, 2010). Grandmaster Remy Presas insisted that talking about Arnis is not just about explaining the martial art but also sharing

Filipino history and culture (Ignacio, 2012). University of the Philippines Diliman Professor and well-known practitioner of the art Felipe Jocano Jr. also mentioned that even by just looking at the bladed weapons, Arnisadors are provided with a mental image of our history and traditions (Ignacio, 2012).

Then, the stories of the use if not the effectiveness of Arnis from the distant past becomes more real through the personal narratives of the so-called Grandmasters and teachers of the art. Personal narrative becomes part of the folklore of the group as a verbal proof that such and such techniques or styles work in real life. Personal narratives are also told and re-told by practitioners to add some kind of updated authority for their groups.

Training and Folklore

Aside from the historical aspect, personal narratives as folklore also exist in the training proper. In this section, I would like to focus on three features of the training.

First, finding a teacher or a group to train with and then sustaining that training is already a significant aspect of my Arnis experience. Second, that there were contradicting ideas regarding the practicality of Arnis. Non-practitioners would say that it is useless if you have no weapon, some practitioners combine the stick fighting part of Arnis with other empty-hand martial arts from Japan or South Korea, and some would demonstrate the concept of transferability of techniques from the weapons to the empty-hand. Such debates contribute to either the perception of Arnis as a dying art compared to the marketability of other martial arts, or as a complete and functional system sought after especially by foreigners. Lastly, the training itself highlights repetition of the techniques, the use of rubber

tires as a practice dummy, and even the idea that calluses and other injuries in the hand or arm are parts of strengthening the body. There are also terms utilized in training such as *pugay* which is the Arnis version of a bow to show respect for the opponent. I was also taught the importance of footwork both in offense and defense.

Looking at the three sample documentaries on Arnis, we have the common complaint about the prominence of foreign martial arts such as karate, judo, and now taekwondo and Muay Thai affecting the availability of groups teaching Arnis. Financial concerns of both students and teachers were also highlighted. Several teachers are convinced to migrate and teach abroad while a lot of Filipino students have to work for themselves and their families first, unlike some Western practitioners who could train full time several months in the Philippines (Go, 2010). The documentary "Rebirth of the Rebellion Sport" by Franco Mabanta (2017) also showed how personal family concerns of the athletes could sometimes disrupt training despite already being sponsored by the government.

Despite these challenges, a lot of Arnisadors keep coming back to the art for various reasons. The beauty of the art and its perceived effectiveness for self-defense is one (Go, 2010; Ignacio, 2012; Davis, 2006; Acosta, 2006; Knight, 2007). There are themes around fulfillment, purpose, and personal or family legacy as reflected in various Filipino Martial Arts Digest Articles such as "Guro Ariel Ramos" (2005), "Tapi-tapi: The Heart of Modern Arnis" (2005), and "CKIUSA" by Master Ed Goco Galang (2006). Lastly, packed with historical and cultural references, is the sense of patriotism and Filipino identity (Go, 2010; Ignacio, 2012; Mabanta, 2017).

Repetition of basic or core techniques is echoed by Master Burton Richardson and former Senator Miguel Zubiri (Ignacio, 2012), our SEA Games Arnis athletes

(Mabanta, 2017) and several articles in the Filipino Martial Arts Digest (Almagro and Macachor, 2006; Babao, 2007). Consequently, repetitive training creates automatic reactions to pressure tests or competitions (Balicki and Zubiri in Ignacio, 2012; Mabanta, 2017). These experiences all tie up to the idea of breaking the body, of callusing the hands, and of training the mind to perform within the arsenal of each style and adapt accordingly during actual application of the techniques.

We can also see the values deliberately or unintentionally taught through actions such as respect through *pugay*, patience and perseverance during repetition of techniques, and adaptability and resilience during the breaking of the body so that the techniques become second nature. From such narratives including the previous section, we can surmise that the physical training and performance of the techniques are part of the communication process of folklore in Arnis. At the very least, this involves possible imbibing of the values associated with the actions such as respect through the *pugay*.

These narratives are also not exclusive to Arnis but can also be found in other martial arts. Karate for example can be viewed as having an additional “world-of-meaning” and symbols that is communicated or passed down only through training and the embodiment of the techniques (Cohen, 2006, p. 75; Bride, 2016). Through specific movements, one can analyze historical background, values associated with warriors and war such as the Bushido, and a culture’s perceived relationship of the body and its surroundings (Cohen, 2006; Farrer and Whalen-Bridge, 2011; Kusnierz, 2011)

Spencer’s (2009) study on the callusing of the body of mixed martial artists presents us with similar narratives with that of breaking the body during training to instill techniques, proper mindset, and the tolerance to pain during

competition. He also noted that by undergoing the rigors of training and competition, his respondents felt that they became more interwoven with the community and its traditions (Spencer, 2009).

While the pieces of information in this chapter focuses more on the activities during training, it can still be argued that they comprise the folklore of the Arnis community. Again, I must reiterate that folklore in this paper does not pertain solely to any supernatural story or practice but generally to the form and transfer of traditional knowledge of a certain group which in this case is the Arnis community.

Such personal narratives regarding training become folklore by presenting a shared story of the struggle, pain, fulfillment, motivation, and certain aspects of training as an Arnis practitioner. These personal narratives also pass down lessons not only about how certain techniques work or how training usually goes during the practitioner's time, but also possible life lessons, values, and norms observed within the Arnis community. Looking at a larger picture shows how these personal narratives, shared as a shared experience passed by various sources to another generation for example, is similar to how folklore or the story of the people in the group is transmitted and perhaps even transformed. In a way, the life stories related to training add to the verbal lore of the group while the training procedures themselves add to the customary lore (Madden, 2019).

Arnis as a Context of Folklore

During the discussion, the folklore highlighted were those related to the history of the group as well as the training process of being an Arnis practitioner.

The folklore that relates to the history of the group consists of stories that attempt to explain the origins and the development of Arnis in general or per particular group or style. Some of the stories can be verified through a more rigorous historical investigation while some are arguably based on debunked information, such as the Malay as part of the wave of migration, or data that are difficult to ascertain due to lack of other evidence. This question of evidence is particularly challenging with narratives contextualized in Filipino societies or the Spanish colonial period.

Nevertheless, I acknowledged them all as a significant part of the historicizing process and identified the formation of each group and the Arnis community in general. For me, such stories somehow provided a sentiment that the art that I am training with is really rooted in Filipino history and culture and thus practicing it also helps in strengthening that Filipino pride and identity.

Related to this intersection of folklore and history are traditions of using amulets, charms, and other traditional Filipino healing arts. The clubs I have trained with however did not have this tradition.

Another shared narrative in the community is the training process. While each group, style, and teacher may have certain procedures, I have identified common themes in each story. The first theme is the struggle of finding a teacher and sustaining the actual training. The second theme revolves around the process of callusing or breaking the body in order for the techniques to be memorized and become second nature to the practitioner.

I think it must be reiterated once again that the term folklore here refers to the perceived traditional knowledge of the members of a group (the folk) that takes various forms of presentation and transmission. While the paper focused on the

verbal form of folklore, this form also made up of various types such as fairytales, proverbs, urban legends, poems, songs, jokes, and in this case personal narratives.

In this paper, I attempted to show how personal narratives can be considered folklore. First, personal narratives contain stories from the practitioners themselves as well as the stories that were passed down within their groups. These personal narratives, when shared to the group, may add to the stories that legitimizes their techniques or their style as well as reinforces the historical and traditional narratives of the Arnis community.

Second, personal narratives help in the transmission of shared stories similar to what other folklore forms are being transmitted. While a person can be seen as the original source, the shared narratives if taken presents a communal experience. Through partaking in such stories as both listeners and storytellers themselves, Arnisadors also become vessels of folklore which they can either retell based on how they heard it or change consciously or unconsciously based on their own interpretation, memory, story-telling capability, and added experiences.

Here we can also see the significance of using autoethnography, especially the analytic type, as it presented my personal experience but was also able to show that such narrative is also shared among other members. The use as well as the role of the various types of autoethnography in folklore research and martial arts studies could also be further explored. From either the perspective of a storyteller or autoethnography, further research can also be done to look into the innovative process of retelling folklore in Arnis or other martial arts.

Another topic that might further be investigated is the other forms of folklore associated with Arnis as well as the method of communicating them. An example is what the initial version of this paper attempted to explore- the embodiment of folklore. By embodiment I meant that how the body itself and its kinetic actions

through performed aspects of the art could also transmit tradition. While this was mentioned in the training section, concepts of performed tradition, embodiment of folklore, kinetic communication or transmission, and body callusing can be further studied.

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