

## ANTHROPOLOGY & HOPOLOGY

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# Kinaesthetic anthropology, kinetic-aesthetic embodiment, and the preservation of De Campo 123 Original

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### Abstract

**Problem.** This paper explores a highly influential, but not widely practiced, system of Filipino Martial Arts, De Campo 123 Original, that has survived from the *Juego Todo* era of stick-fighting duels in the Philippines, but has been in danger of dying out, representing the loss of an intangible Filipino cultural heritage. The art can be recognised by its kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities, which are often misunderstood as simply affectations.

**Method.** A hermeneutic-phenomenological approach we call ‘kinaesthetic anthropology’ is adopted, that involves ‘thick participation’ [Samudra 2008], in which the cultural knowledge recorded in the practitioner-researcher’s body becomes the object of study. Specific attention is paid to exploring three kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities of the De Campo system. Insights are developed through *immersive practice with a view to mastery*, and considered in relation to the historical context and philosophies of the system’s founder.

**Results.** Exploration of the unique kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities of De Campo reveals that they are more than idiosyncratic affectations, and are instead techniques that consistently shave off time between strikes, allowing the practitioner to deliver more strikes in a shorter amount of time, consistent with the founder’s documented ‘fast draw’ philosophy, and the historical circumstances of the *Juego Todo* duels, in which the art was developed. **Conclusion.** We argue that ‘kinaesthetic anthropology’ involving a focus on kinetic-aesthetic embodiment facilitated by *immersive practice with a view to mastery*, not only allows for deeper insights than those which can be gained by dabbling or sitting on the sidelines, but also engages respectfully with the martial art systems and practices being investigated; and has the potential to document and contribute to the renewal and preservation of endangered martial arts systems, that often represent intangible cultural assets.

### Introduction

Although the weapon-based martial arts of the Philippines are frequently referred to by the ‘interchangeable’ titles *Arnis*, *Kali*, or *Eskrima*, it would be a misconception to perceive the Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) as a single combative system. At least seventy distinct regional and family styles have been identified [Wiley 1996], though some suggest the number

is much greater, and in many ways the labels used to describe them as a group, are as meaningful as the label of Kung-Fu for the many and varied Chinese Martial Arts. Like Kung-Fu styles, FMA systems can be recognised by their kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities. The training vitae of contemporary eskrimadors can be ‘read’ in practitioners’ embodiment of specific kinetic-aesthetic or stylistic movement qualities and features. This paper explores a highly influential, but not widely practiced, system of

Filipino Martial Arts, De Campo 123 Original (otherwise referred to simply as 'De Campo'), that has survived from the *Juego Todo* (no holds barred) era of stick-fighting duels that were popular during town fiestas in the first half of the twentieth century in the Philippines but has been in danger of dying out, representing the loss of an intangible Filipino cultural heritage. A 'signature pedagogy' [Shulman 2005] of the system involves not only technical imitation, but a strong emphasis on embodying its kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities. This paper explores a number of the De Campo system's core kinetic-aesthetics (eg. *pikpik* and *hayang-kulob*), that are the most noticeable when comparing De Campo 123 Original and its derivatives to other FMA systems but are also often the least understood. Using a methodological approach, we call 'kinaesthetic anthropology', that values the proprioceptive experience of immersive practice with a view to mastery of technique, we argue these selected De Campo kinetic-aesthetics are more than just the idiosyncratic affectations they are sometimes perceived to be by martial artists outside the De Campo system and actually invite insight into the core strategies and tactics of the art's founder. We note that actively disciplining oneself to embody the art's kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities functions as a 'technology of the self' [Foucault 1994] which facilitates the development of the combative capabilities promised by the system. More importantly, we conclude that our kinaesthetic anthropological approach may have value to other martial arts researchers, keen to contribute to the renewal and preservation of intangible cultural-historical assets, like the many Filipino Martial Arts systems, that are in danger of being lost in an era of homogenisation driven by internet eclecticism.

### Kinaesthetic anthropology and/as 'thick participation'

Anthropological inquiry is generally understood as the study of human culture, experience, and social behaviour, both in the present and the past. The methodological approach of this paper has roots in an area of anthropological inquiry that has been described by de Garis [1999] as "kinetic ethnography . . . an active, productive process, rather than a passive recording of others' behaviours and beliefs" [p. 66]. Concerned to challenge the preoccupation of the (transcendental) ethnographer with capturing "so-called hidden truths" [de Garis 1999: 65], de Garis clarifies, "getting into the ring and 'going a few rounds with the champ' does not necessarily bestow an epistemological privilege or provide access to 'secrets'" [de Garis 1999: 71]. However, a serious attempt to embody cultural practices does allow the ethnographer "to reflect on, evaluate, and integrate their own sensuous experiences into the ethnographic text" [de Garis 1999: 73]. There are certainly echoes of

Wacquant's 'carnal sociology' of the Chicago boxing scene here, which he describes as a "sociological-pugilistic *bildungsroman*" [Wacquant 2004: vii]. However, this paper has a different goal than sociological insight. Following the logic of 'performance ethnography' we recognise that "bodies harbor knowledge about culture, and that performance allows for the exchange of that knowledge across bodies" [Madison, Hamera 2006: 339]. However, it has been claimed that performance ethnographies tend to over-focus on "performance (bodies seen) and inscription (bodies read)" the result of which is the positioning of "[t]he primacy of sight over all other senses" [Samudra 2008: 672]. Playing on Geertz' [1973: 20-21] notion of "thick description", Samudra [2008] offers "thick participation" as an alternative concept, in which cultural knowledge is "recorded first in the anthropologist's body and only later externalized as visual or textual data for purposes of analysis" [p. 667].

Samudra [2008] recognises three possibilities for thick participation: (1) documentation of kinaesthetic details; (2) articulation of somatic sensation; and (3) constructing somatic narratives that reveal social and cultural aspects of the lived experience (the pedagogical practices, axiological commitments, and hierarchical relationships, for example). Samudra [2008] has argued that "[p]hysical memory, performed repetitively, enacts sociocultural meanings for individuals, including the participating anthropologist" [p. 667]. 'Thick participation' as a form of "embodied ethnography (ie. acquainting oneself with a kinaesthetic form by practicing it)" transforms the anthropologist's body into their object of study [Green 2013: 126], and allows one to dig "deeper than the usual relatively detached participant observer could" [Green 2013: 139]. This parallels the notion of "*enactive ethnography*, the brand of immersive fieldwork based on 'performing the phenomenon'" that Wacquant [2015] argues "is a fruitful path toward disclosing the cognitive, conative and cathectic schemata (that is, habitus) that generates the practices and underlie the cosmos under investigation" [p. 2, emphasis in the original]. What we are proposing as 'kinaesthetic anthropology' takes 'thick participation' as sensitivity to, and the participatory embodiment of, the somatic culture and technique of a martial art style or system as an important starting point for inquiry; and following Wacquant [2015] we argue for "social competency (as distinct from empirical saturation)" [p. 1], or what we describe as *immersive practice with a view to mastery* as essential in this endeavour, the equivalent of "undergoing long-term training [that] can allow for deeper and more profound understanding" [Ryan 2019: 36], providing possibilities of insight into the bodily experience of practicing a martial art that cannot be gained by dabbling, or observing from the sidelines.

Our kinaesthetic anthropology begins from a set of important premises. First, we recognise martial arts as a multi-dimensional practice that is constituted by

variety in terms of, and varying degrees of emphasis on: technique, tactics, attribute development, weaponry, pedagogy, philosophy, and hierarchy; and that the unique constellation of these varied contents and emphases construct the very form and existence of a given martial art style [Wetzler 2015]. We understand martial art styles or systems as inevitably culturally-historically located, emerging from complex socio-political contexts; which may also account for significant variation within a family of styles (for example, between Northern and Southern Kung-Fu systems; or Spanish, French and Italian fencing styles; or indeed between FMA systems). We therefore acknowledge that forms of martial art differ, often in dramatic ways, and are irreducible to simple definitions such as self-defence methods, or combat sports; and normative categories such as 'modern' and 'traditional' often collapse under scrutiny [Bowman 2020], particularly when investigating specific styles in practice. Despite this, we side with Bowman [2019] in recognising that just as "[m]artial arts as a cluster of familiar ideas, motifs, images, and as a category has certainly achieved stabilization in contemporary discourses, even if it lacks both precision and a stable referent" [p. 58], it is thus also possible to talk about 'Filipino Martial Arts' [Jocano Jr. 2010; Wiley 1996]. However, we do so while recognising that different FMA systems have developed out of, and need to be understood in the context of, their own unique socio-historical situations; and recognise that different systems can be identified by their own unique kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities, even enabling the determination of a practitioner's training genealogy by the identification of their embodiment of subtle kinetic-aesthetic distinctions (such as idiosyncrasies as the placement of the non-weapon hand during combat, which varies across FMA systems). We also note that the tendency to emphasise the commonality and adaptability of Filipino Martial Arts [see for example Foon, Inosanto 1980], and engagement in eclectic youtube-based learning across multiple systems simultaneously, may have unwittingly encouraged a tendency among some practitioners to overlook the distinctive elements of FMA systems, sometimes blinding practitioners to critical insights that make a system effective for a unique set of circumstances, or leading to a loss of the richness that is the FMA cultural heritage as differences are often washed out during assimilation, the antithesis of what was probably intended. This is not to suggest a problem with multi-style approaches, some of which preserve the classical systems in their own way, as happens in the famous Doces Pares system for example, where only San Miguel Eskrima, and perhaps the Corto Kurbada styles are given particular emphasis. The point we are aiming to make here, however, is that we consider the kinaesthetic experience of the kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities of different FMA systems to be both practically (combatively) and anthropologically significant.

Like other researchers exploring "somatic cultures such as dance and martial arts" we accept "the materiality of the body as central to understanding the lived realities of these practices, given that language alone is often inadequate to convey and transmit embodied knowledge" [Loong 2013: 1], and that the body is our "first and most natural instrument" or "first and most natural technical object" [Mauss 1936/1973: 75]. We recognise martial arts as "sites of embodied cultural transmission" [Channon, Jennings 2014: 775] and, following Spatz [2015], we work from the premise "that embodied practice is structured by knowledge in the form of technique" [p. 1] and likewise that "[t]echnique is knowledge that structures practice" [p. 1]. In his exploration of this concept, Spatz goes on to argue that "[e]mbodied practice is epistemic. It is structured by and productive of knowledge" opening the possibility of the practitioner coming to know through technique [Spatz 2015: 25]. Of particular interest to us in this study are those technical peculiarities that are often perceived by fellow martial artists from outside the system as being simply 'affectations', sometimes without any obvious purpose, or having a function that was largely kept a 'secret' by the system's founder. It is these 'affectations', as a specific category of technique, that we describe as kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities throughout this paper, and whose strategic function we explore through 'thick participation'. Thus, our inquiry is centred around "an idea or a question" [Jones 2002: 8], focused upon deepening our understanding of the purpose of De Campo's kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities (rather than understanding the 'culture' of this FMA system per se), and we take Spatz' conceptualisation of this intertwined relationship between technique and knowledge as core in the methodological challenge to understand the strategic logic embedded within these selected techniques (or kinetic-aesthetics) of the De Campo system of eskrima. This gives our kinaesthetic anthropological inquiry a 'kinetic archaeological' dimension as we attempt to excavate the movements to uncover the tactical and strategic logic of the founder.

The method of kinaesthetic anthropology, as we approach it in this paper, should be understood as situated with the paradigm of hermeneutic phenomenology, as it "is characterized by an attitude of sensitivity towards the experiences of the research participants" [Standal, Engelsrud 2013: 162], and through its concern with the lived experience of practicing a martial art, is focused "toward illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within the experience that may be taken for granted . . . with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding" [Lavery 2003: 24]. Within this paradigm of research, "the notion of value-free research has been challenged as questionable" [Lavery 2003: 26], and we recognise that the results of our kinaesthetic anthropology are provisional, "the best understandings we have

been able to produce thus far, not a statement of what is ultimately real” [Lavery 2003: 26]. Our understanding, provisional as it is, is based on experience with the techniques of the system under investigation. Ashcroft has argued that:

To possess a language is to possess a technique . . . One speaker ‘sees’ the world in the same way as another because they share a language, that is, share a technique for putting certain rules into practice; the ‘seeing’ is embedded in the practice. [Ashcroft 2001: 69]

Likewise, we would argue that learning the martial arts techniques of different (FMA) styles or systems is akin to learning a new language, a movement vocabulary and grammar with which to dialogue with an opponent; and that the expressive (and therefore strategic) possibilities of this combative language are revealed in attempts to ‘use’ the language. As Ashcroft asserts:

The meaning and nature of perceived reality are not determined within the minds of the users, nor even within the language itself, but within the use, within the multiplicity of relationships which operate in the system. [Ashcroft 2001: 69-70]

Thus, we understand that each practitioner of an art may arrive at somewhat varied conclusions about the strategic purpose of a particular technique, simply because of the different situations under which they have attempted to use the art’s vocabulary and grammar. This means that any kinaesthetic anthropological work should be acknowledged as inevitably socio-historically oriented, both in terms of how it treats its objects of study, and in terms of how the results of this inquiry should be understood. In both a hermeneutic and poststructural sense, we see ourselves as bodies “totally imprinted by history” [Foucault 1971/1994: 376], and like Spatz, “[w]e know we are looking at technique . . . when we recognize people in different eras and locations as engaging with materiality and embodiment in similar ways” thus suggesting possibilities of historical links *sometimes* attributable to lineage connections between practices [Spatz 2015: 60]. Certainly, we side with Mauss [1936/1973: 75] in recognising that “[t]here is no technique and no transmission in the absence of tradition”, though some techniques will be nearly universal (ie. take the forehand-backhand slashing pattern common to blade-oriented FMA systems), simply because they represent a compromise between what is possible physically in terms of our nature, and what we have developed through participation in culture [Spatz 2015], in this case, the study of a specific FMA system. We must also recognise that as investigators we are ‘passionate participants’ [Lavery 2003], who aim at developing an account that produces understanding by exploring and interpreting the ontological experience of *immersively practicing a martial art with a view to mastery*. As Spatz argues “[i]f technique is knowledge, then

practice can be research” [Spatz 2015: 60]. Our positioning as researchers, and many of the insights we have developed, thus necessarily rests on our experience as committed practitioners of the art under investigation. We believe this has provided us with a capacity to achieve that which Geertz [1973: 16], identified as essential for ethnographers (or in our case as practitioner researchers), the ability to separate “winks from twitches and real winks from mimicked ones”.

All three authors are ‘lifetime’ martial artists, having commenced training in their youth, and continued on into adulthood (one of us, Rebekah, with 10 years of formal training at the time of writing, and the other two with around 30 years of the martial art training each; and all three authors with FMA practice ranging from 6 to 25 years). All three authors have experience in multiple martial art traditions (from regions including: China, Japan, Korea, America, Brazil, and of course, the Philippines). Rebekah teaches a Capoeira class weekly and was already an Instructor of an eclectic FMA system before studying and becoming a certified Instructor of De Campo 123 Original. She is also currently an Instructor candidate in Bernas Estocadas, an FMA system from Negros Occidental. Robert’s first instructor credentials were achieved in Chinese and Japanese martial arts (both awarded in the 1980s). His earliest exposure to FMA came while he was studying Kung-Fu in the early 1980s, and he taught an eclectic FMA system derived from this experience, before becoming a certified Instructor of De Campo 123 Original, and more recently, Bernas Estocadas, during the period defined by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of Rebekah and Robert’s martial art training has taken place in Australia, although they did travel together to the Philippines to train with Paolo in 2019, and Rebekah also studied Capoeira during a trip to Brazil in 2018. Paolo is both a Filipino national from the Visayan region, and a Filipino Martial Arts instructor with experience and/or qualifications in multiple systems. Paolo’s earliest exposure to Filipino Martial Arts came while he was training in the Korean martial art of Hwarang-Do, introducing him to Eskrima De Campo JDC-IO and LAMECO Eskrima (both systems that were developed by senior students of De Campo founder, Jose Caballero) and Baraw Sugbo (a Cebuano knife defence system in which he later became a certified Instructor). Paolo is also a certified instructor of Estokada De Campo (a De Campo variant developed by Celestino Macachor, derived from his apprenticeship to Ireneo “Eric” Olivides, founder of Eskrima De Campo JDC-IO); and he is also a qualified Instructor of Bernas Estocadas. Most importantly for this study, Paolo is a Senior Instructor of, and international training director for, De Campo 123 Original. He has worked closely with Grandmaster Eduardo Ceniza (Baraw Sugbo), Grandmaster William Bernas (Bernas Estocadas), and Master Jomalin Caballero (De Campo 123 Original), creating video-based



instructional series to help preserve and propagate their arts. As someone with experience in both the original De Campo system and its multiple variants, Paolo is clearly an ‘insider’ to the culture and practices of the tradition under investigation.

As instructors and students of Filipino Martial Arts, we work from the premise that martial arts function as forms of embodied knowledge, “in which the body is the subjective source or intersubjective ground of experience” [Csordas 1999: 143]. Like the authors in the edited collection *Martial arts as embodied knowledge: Asian traditions in a transnational world*, we assume “at all times that embodied practices are forms of knowledge” [Farrer, Whalen-Bridge 2011: 1]; and following Schrenk, that as martial artists we are “introspective, proprioceptive perceivers of our own bodies and their movements”, becoming an ‘audience’ for our own aesthetic performance [Schrenk 2014: 101]. Sometimes we are the only audience [Klens-Bigman 2002], particularly through practice of an art’s pre-arranged sequences or forms [Schrenk 2014: 107], known in national Philippine Arnis organisations since the mid-1970s by the term *anyo*; in some FMA systems by the term *sayaw* (dance); and in Ilonggo systems by the term *dagway* (forms) or *mustra* (possibly from the Spanish *muestra*, meaning show or demonstrate). We are also a proprioceptive audience for our own movement in terms of the overall kinetic-aesthetics – what might sometimes seem like the trivial affectations – of the martial art system under study that a practitioner might express through *karenza* (solo improvised ‘shadow-fencing’). As Sheets-Johnstone notes:

[I]n the most basic sense, skill-learning is rooted in the capacity of one bodily presence to be attentive to another and to pattern movement along the lines of the other, imitating the way in which the other performs something, but also selecting the occasions on which one will and will not perform according to the methods of another . . . Aesthetic and sport pursuits may seem unrelated, but they have a common thread in our capacity to imitate, and to innovate and habituate on the basis of our imitations. [Sheets-Johnstone 2000: 358-359]

Thus, we adopt the position that a serious commitment to embodying (or mastering) what we are calling the kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities of a martial art system, is an important step in both developing competence and in a ‘kinaesthetic anthropology’. A kinaesthetic anthropology involves the mindful practice, and proprioceptive embodiment, of the kinetic-aesthetics of the system under investigation, in order to gain the introspective and intersubjective understanding that rewards the practitioner with insights into the strategies and tactics of the system, where strategy is understood as “a guide for doing things . . . derived from a core set of beliefs as to the best way to proceed in combat and attain victory”

while tactics are “the specific tools needed to achieve those goals” [Jocano Jr. 2010: 302]. Thus, as a kind of functional hopology that studies “weapons and combative systems in relation to their combative function and effects” [Draeger 1979: 3], we are engaged in an exploration of the combative purpose of what otherwise appear to be simply stylistic affectations in the De Campo system. More specifically, our study might be seen to contribute to a “new hopology” of the kind engaged in “[d]etailed explorations, or comparative studies, of actual techniques” recently proposed by Judkins [2019: 7].

In order to validate our kinaesthetic anthropology of De Campo 123 Original, and therefore our excavation of the strategies and tactics of the system, we supplement and cross-reference our proprioceptive interrogation of the art’s kinetic-aesthetics, with written material that documents stories and sayings of the art’s founder. We also tested our perceptions and assumptions against each others’ experience with De Campo. Given Paolo is the only true insider to Filipino culture itself, despite all three authors’ long-term experience in martial arts cultures more generally, this last action was a very important step throughout the writing of this paper, ensuring that the intuitions of the Australian authors were tested, not only with each other, but also against the understanding of the Filipino author, an insider to the culture from which the art being studied had emerged; albeit with full recognition that cultures are dynamic and changing, and almost 100 years separates us today from the origin of the De Campo system. Prior to writing the paper, Robert also produced a video outlining, in the format of a personal diary, some of the insights into the system that were ultimately articulated in this paper; and this video was shared on Facebook, Youtube [Parkes 2021], and after Paolo watched the video and supported its insights, via the De Campo 123 Original website. Many practitioners of De Campo affirmed the usefulness of the insights provided in assisting their training and understanding, and a number of senior FMA practitioners commented publicly that they thought the explanations in the video were excellent. One long-term senior FMA practitioner, another Filipino national, with experience of De Campo 123 Original and three decades of experience of its variants, watched both the video and read a draft of this paper, and noted on a public Facebook post that “a new layer of understanding the De Campo system” had been added, and that Robert has “shared a lot of fresh insights in his videos [and] I can learn a lot from him about the De Campo system that I encountered 3 decades ago” [Riviera 2021]. Thus, the video and the sharing of the draft paper with experienced insiders operated as a kind of dialogic ‘member checking’ ensuring that the insights we gained through our kinaesthetic anthropological investigation appeared valid to the members of the FMA and De Campo community. This offered both positivist confirmation that our insights seemed valid to

other practitioners of the art, and constructionist opportunities to modify our articulation of the insights in our paper, where feedback suggested we should do so [Harvey 2015]. The latter almost exclusively came through the interaction of the authors over the text. Of course, we recognise that we are inevitably filtering our understanding through that which we have directly learned from study with one or more FMA or martial art teachers, the historical fact that we are practicing the art in cultural-historical contexts that are different from the founder, and with ‘desires’ which inevitably drive our individual practice and engagement in the Filipino Martial Arts.

## Overview of Filipino Martial Arts

Before we get to the specifics of the De Campo system, it is useful to place it in the context of FMA more broadly. What we know as FMA today, are combative traditions from Luzon and the Visayas, the Christianised northern and middle groups of islands of the Philippine archipelago, that for more than three hundred years formed part of the colonies of Spain. Arguably, FMA, as we know it today, is a hybrid, the legacy of the encounter between Indigenous regional fighting arts and the practical and pedagogical methods of historical Spanish fencing; refined through revolution and rebellion during struggles for independence; formalised in the pre-WWII period through the formation of sporting clubs; and finally, officially recognised in 2009 as the country’s national sport [Parkes 2019]. One likely result of the colonial encounter was an ingenious Filipino re-engineering of the geometric logic of Spanish fencing methods [Harris 2001: 432], particularly for local weapons, with the *baston* (cane), *bolo* (what might be called ‘working blades’ or cutlass-style machete), and *baraw* (dagger) “forming the core” of many FMA systems [Jocano Jr. 2010: 300]. While some systems are famous for a more exclusive or specialised focus on a specific weapon, take Oido de Caburata and Tapado’s use of the long stick [Harris 1989], Balintawak’s use of the single stick [Maningas 2015], or Arnes Diablo’s defence against the dagger [Ceniza 2018], other systems, such as LAMECO Eskrima [Gould 2014], Giron Eskrima [Somera 1998], or Inosanto Kali [Foon, Inosanto 1980] and its many offshoots, offer training in a smorgasbord of assorted weapons and unarmed methods, the result of synthesising techniques and drills from multiple traditions into a single curriculum.

The term most frequently used in the Philippines to describe FMA is *Arnis*, from the Spanish *Arnés* (related to the English word ‘harness’) and referring originally in Europe to the armour of a caballero (knight). The phrase *Arnis de Mano* is also sometimes, but less commonly used, which literally means ‘armour of the hand’; and although its etymology is in doubt, it is often thought to be “a probable reference to the attire of the inhabitants

that the Spanish first encountered” [Jocano Jr. 2010: 300], which would seem to assume a reference to a pre-existing fighting art, though one would have expected the breastplate armour of the conquistador would have rendered this term more logical for the Spanish themselves. If it was a term used to refer “to the battle harness worn by Filipino soldiers under Spanish command” [Harris 2001: 423], this would probably make more sense. Another less convincing but frequent refrain, links the term *Arnis* to the costumes of actors in *Moro Moro* plays in which the Christianised Visayan warriors successfully repulse, as part of Spanish forces, the Muslim ‘pirates’ from Mindanao. Such plays, written and encouraged by local Jesuit priests, make deliberate use of *Arnis* movements, and reconstruct and repeat a historical conflict which continues to have resonances today [Macaraeg 2017]. Arguably, given that the word *Arnés* is often used in Spanish as a synonym for *Armas* (weapons or arms) – a point made to one of the authors by fellow De Campo Instructor, Kristov Cerda [2021] from his research into historical Spanish fencing – and that in the Philippines it is common to refer to the rattan stick itself as an *Arnis*, a later origin is just as likely to be a suggestive reference to the fact that the arnisador’s only arms and armour was the *arnis* (rattan cane) s/he uses as both ‘sword and shield’. Like words in any language, it is also just possible its meanings have changed over time, and without written documents to attest to how a word was used in a particular time period, alternate meanings may have been erased from memory.

The second most popular term for FMA in the Philippines, particularly in the Visayas, is *Eskrima*, the local pronunciation of the Spanish word for ‘fencing’ (*esgrima*), suggesting that the eskrimador uses their *baston*, *bolo*, or *baraw* with the skill of a swordsman. Among ex-pat and second and third generation Filipinos living in the United States during the Civil Rights era, it became popular to refer to the art as *Kali*, mostly likely derived from a word that appears in old colonial Tagalog-Spanish dictionaries as *Calis* when spelt the Spanish way (meaning ‘sword’ or ‘swordsman’) [Lorenzo 2011]. This appears to have developed as a kind of resistance to the use of the Spanish loan-words [Parkes 2016], despite there being a lack of evidence for any connection with any form of pre-Hispanic fighting art [Nepangue 2001]. It is certainly ironic given the continued high prevalence of Spanish terms to describe drills within *Kali* systems [Nepangue, Macachor 2007; Parkes 2019]. *Kali* has subsequently become the most recognisable term for FMA outside the Philippines, and perhaps is best thought of as synonymous with a Filipino-American variant of the art that evolved in Hawaii and California, although this idea is still under discussion [but see specifically the comments by Lunia and Stewart in Franco 2021b]. However, it should also be noted that some well-known *Arnis* systems, such as Leo Gaje’s Pekiti Tirsia, and the blade art of

the Ilustrisimo family, made a switch from *Arnis* to *Kali* (or *Kalis* in the case of the latter) as the key descriptor of their art as this term gained international traction; and is one expression of a broader decolonisation project as Filipinos, and especially Filipino-Americans, seek to find “an ancestral habitus that embodies a physical critique of [colonial] domination” [McClung 2015: 30].

What is clear from an investigation into FMA, is that detailed regional histories are needed, given the scattered and therefore sometimes isolated island populations, the diverse cultural and linguistic groups, and the uneven experience of colonialism. This diversity would suggest that synoptic histories that seek to apply a singular historical narrative to FMA should be treated with suspicion and need to be supplemented with localised inquiries. For example, there is convincing evidence that during the administration of Governor-General Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera (1635-1644), Cebuanos, Pampangueños, and Ilonggos were conscripted into militia to pacify the Moros of Sulu who conducted seasonal raids on the coastal towns of the Visayas [Nepangue, Macachor 2007], and piracy throughout the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago as well [Macaraeg 2017]. It is logical to assume that the Christianised Filipino conscripts were trained in some sort of Iberian fighting methods for their task [Nepangue, Macachor 2007]. It is also likely, as this theory of Nepangue and Macachor [2007 2015] outlines, that veterans of the Sulu [and other] campaigns against their Muslim neighbours to the south, returned to their homes, and taught members of their villages the combative methods that had worked best for them. Therefore, in order to account for the significant array of combative systems one finds in the Philippines, work at the local level is needed to understand how the evolution of FMA unfolded in different locations, especially given the *barangay* or village, formed the limit and basis of a large portion of ancient Filipino tribal society as Reyes [1999] reminds us.

### Signature pedagogies of FMA

In addition to the use of sticks, short swords, and daggers as core elements of the curricula of FMA systems, there are also a number of pedagogies that are so ubiquitous as to be worthy of note. Among these signature pedagogies of FMA, the most common is undoubtedly some form of *Numerado* (numbered) attack and defence practice forming an important component of the foundational material shared in almost every FMA system [Harris 2001: 432], and FMA textbook [see for example, the following: Maningas 2015; Medina 2014; Presas 1983; Somera 1998; Wiley 2019]. The exact form of *Numerado* is not identical across systems, and indeed it may have other names (most commonly, *Abecedario* or “basics” though *Abecedario* in some systems may not

be *Numerado*). However, one of its most common manifestations involves one eskrimador ‘feeding’ strikes in sequence following the *Numerado* (numbered angles) to another eskrimador who must execute an appropriate defensive technique for each angle [Harris 2001: 433]. FMA systems vary in terms of the number of angles of attack that they identify, five (*Cinco Tiros*), seven (*Siyete Pares*), and twelve (*Doce Pares*) being the most common [Jocano Jr. 2010]. As eskrimador and FMA researcher Eirik Jundis has remarked recently during an online interview [see: Franco 2021a], such pedagogical practices have their analogue, and perhaps origin, in European fencing systems. Depending on the system, *Numerado* drills may take a number of different forms, and the excellent analysis of FMA systems by Mark Wiley [2013], is very useful here, distinguishing the four major possibilities: (1) a direct counter-strike to the opponent’s body or more commonly their hand, executing what is widely referred to as a ‘defanging the snake’ manoeuvre (striking the opponent’s weapon hand in an attempted immediate disarm); (2) a direct stick-to-body counter-strike, coupled with a simultaneous supporting hand parry; (3) a stick-to-stick parry that meets and deflects or follows the force of the attack, redirecting it and countering in as close to a single motion as possible - the parry typically accelerating the opponent’s weapon on its trajectory, making the attacker’s weapon recovery more difficult; and (4) a stick-to-stick block-check-counter response that directly meets the force of the opponent’s attack, knocking it back, to the ground, or sweeping it aside, coupled with a simultaneous checking hand manoeuvre. Each of the above methods is usually accompanied by an evasive motion to remove oneself from the line of attack. Range or measure tends to determine which method is deployed in actual free sparring or combat. In the second stage of most *Numerado* practice, one or more counterstrikes are added to the initial defence that has assisted in clearing a line for an unfettered counterattack.

A second common, but not universal, pedagogy found in many FMA systems is some form of *Contra y Contra* (counter-for-counter) practice [Harris 2001: 432-433], often referred to as *Sumbrada* (shading), or various terms that roughly translate as attack and defence: *Sangga at Patama*, and *Opensa-Depensa*. Sometimes it is also referred to by the term *Palakaw* (operating or working method) probably from the root-word *lakaw* (walking). Counter-for-counter practice may begin with pre-set sequences of attack and defence, but through the progressive introduction of random elements, becomes increasingly freeform as the practitioner develops skill, progressing into *Kuridas* (all-inclusive flow), most likely from the Spanish word *Corrida* (running). In counter-for-counter drills, each person switches roles constantly between feeder and responder, or attacker and defender. Such drills become platforms into which are inserted weapon disarms, strikes, kicks, and take-



downs, to be executed during the flow. Specialised drills built upon this training methodology can be identified in many arts, such as the gateway *Sabayan* (simultaneous) drill, or the adaptable *Sagang Labo* (shield & strike) drill found in Pekiti Tirsia Kali and known elsewhere as *Hubad Lubad* (tie & untie); the *Box Sumbrada* (shading or shield & counter) drill originally developed by the late founder of Serrada Escrima, Angel Cabales, that is now a cornerstone drill used by many FMA teachers; or the random flow Pendulum drill of the late Maestro Sonny Umpad's Visayan Style Corto Kadena (VSCK) system. It is these question-and-answer 'flow' drills that are often recognised by outsiders as a defining dimension of contemporary FMA systems, often adding to the appeal of FMA-based choreography in Hollywood films.

Many FMA systems will also use some form of mirrored stick-to-stick striking drills, given the title *Sinawali* (weaving), which technically refers to one specific sequence of movements, but has come to be used as a more all-embracing term for any double stick mirrored striking practice. The methods of *Sinawali* actually have their origin in the fighting methods of the Macabebe people, and involve both simple and complex patterns of double stick weaving, using a stick of the same length in each hand [Galang 2000; Somera 1998]. *Sinawali* practice has become a key element of the Arnis taught in Physical Education classes within the Filipino college system. Of these three signature pedagogies of FMA, *Numerado*, *Contra-y-Contra*, and *Sinawali*, the *De Campo 123 Original* system has only its own unique, but rather modest version of *Numerado* (suggestive in the first drill of its Primary curriculum). Its *Hagad-Hubad* (from its High School curriculum), although implying some form of *Contra-y-Contra* practice, is more like a strike-counter-strike-finish drill. We believe the reason for this is that protective equipment for full-contact sparring had not yet emerged when *De Campo 123* was developed, and so the founder focused training for *Juego Todo* competition on building fast reflexes, and immediate and decisive counterattack.

### Jose Diaz Caballero and *De Campo 123 Original*

While there are many different systems of FMA, few have gained the notoriety of *De Campo 123 Original*. The system was "formally formed, founded and named" in 1925 by Jose Diaz Caballero at the age of 18 [Gould 2014: 9]. This was only a few years after the founding of the Labangon Fencing Club (1920-1930), believed to be the first-ever public Eskrima club in the Philippines. According to his protégé Ireneo 'Eric' Olavides, Jose Caballero believed his system to be "very combative and highly functional" and consequently gave it the name 'De Campo' because "it should be learned by soldiers and

practiced inside the soldiers' camp" [Olavides 2018: 31]. In FMA cultural circles *De Campo* is also used as a kind of synonym for *Largo Mano*, or long-hand/long-range techniques, that are assumed to require the open space of a camp to be practiced, as opposed to *De Salon* (a reference to the fencing studio) suggesting *Medio Mano* or medium range techniques, and *De Fondo* (a reference to being grounded) suggesting *Corto Mano*, close-hand or close-range techniques, distinctions encountered by Paolo when discussing FMA with older masters.

It has been reported that Jose Caballero developed his system simply from observing local Eskrima masters as they practiced with each other or faced off in duels and challenge matches during town fiestas [Gould 2014]. The truth of this claim is difficult to determine, and it should be noted that it was, and often still is, a common phenomenon for eskrimadors to present themselves as the creators of their own systems, rather than establishing legitimacy through genealogical charts as is common in Chinese and Japanese martial arts [Reyes 1999]. It is the demonstrable abilities of the practitioner or their "performative efficiency" [Bowman 2016: 926], rather than their certificates, that often count in this tradition, and for Jose Caballero, this is exactly how his reputation was established.

History gives way to myth rapidly within the Filipino martial tradition, as eskrimadors frequently embellish stories of the past in order to claim prestige in the present [Gonzales 2015]. However, unlike other FMA legends, there is corroborated evidence that Jose Caballero was undefeated in more than ten *Juego Todo* matches. As noted earlier, the *Juego Todo* were no holds barred stick-fighting duels that were held - in this case as public sporting competitions - during town fiestas, where the only armour the eskrimador had was the stick in their hand [Gonzales 2015]. It is perhaps his focus on the *Juego Todo* competitions, and his reported passion for gunslinger movies, that lead Jose Caballero to his emphasis on what might be called 'fast draw' techniques, precision targeting, and rapid full-power strikes. Even when practicing in the air, Caballero expected to hear the sound of the stick swishing through space. According to the recollections of one of the most famous students of Jose Caballero, Edgar Sulite:

If he did not hear the wind swishing across the tip of the garote [stick] as each strike cut the air with full intention, he would quickly say: "No Sound!"; "Wrong Sound!"; or "More Sound!". [reported in Gould 2014: 16]

Full intention and commitment were expected by Caballero in every session, and like many *Juego Todo* fighters, he was secretive about his techniques, as Olavides [2018] and Sulite [reported in Gould 2014] have both attested. This did not stop him, however, from developing a written curriculum for the art, that has been preserved by the Caballero family, was partially outlined in Sulite's



[1986: 219] well-regarded *Secrets of Arnis* book, and still forms the foundation of practice in the De Campo 123 Original system today.

The De Campo curriculum, or ‘lesson plan’ as it was called by the founder, was divided into three foundational stages: (1) Primary/Elementary, focusing on seven *solo baston* (single stick) techniques, the last two of which are then ‘mixed’ with the first five; (2) High School, focusing on *doble baston* (double stick) patterns that are also ‘mixed’ with the five primary techniques of the Elementary curriculum, followed by practice of an important method of single stick counter-striking called *Hagad Hubad*; and (3) College, returning the focus again to seven single stick techniques that are combined in contiguous sequences of two, three, and four. In a complete training session, every technique is repeated seven times. The entire routine takes around 60 minutes of almost continuous striking, if performed at a moderate pace. Edgar Sulite would, as a result of this training, often say that “Repetition is the mother of all skills” [Gould 2014: 16].

Only trusted students were introduced to the advanced techniques of the system in what was called the ‘Specialization Course’. Continuing with his metaphorical alignment of his curriculum with the levels of the public education system, Jose Caballero described the Specialization curriculum as the equivalent of a Masters’ course at the University level. A key element of the Specialization course was the practice of the College techniques in what might first appear to be random combinations. Mastery of a special type of footwork called *paspas* (rapid stomping) was also a key feature of training at this highly secretive level. Of course, it is this secrecy, especially common among FMA teachers of the *Juego Todo* era (but sometimes continuing into the present), that has put some FMA systems at risk of extinction; and it is the threat of losing some of these systems, particular De Campo 123 Original, that has in part motivated the journey of the authors to help preserve this system by documenting its unique features.

### Aesthetic embodiment as pedagogy

For each of the authors the study of De Campo 123 Original has involved both direct experience with a teacher, and group practice with the *Bininlan* (heir) to the system, Master Jomalin Caballero, the grandson of the founder. In the case of Maestro Paolo Pagaling (a senior teacher in De Campo), this has involved direct training with Master Jomalin Caballero during visits to Cebu, and in the case of Magtutudlo Robert & Rebekah (qualified De Campo Instructors), direct training in the Philippines, in which they focused exclusively on learning De Campo, training in a park every morning for ten days with Paolo. The sessions started with footwork and body motion and then moved rapidly through the curric-

ulum. Actual training sessions remained exclusively for the three of us. When Paolo noticed a break was needed from the intensity of practice (and the Filipino heat), we would discuss the history, philosophy, culture, and politics of De Campo and FMA more generally. These were welcome moments of both recovery, and insight into the culture of FMA and its “webs of significance” [Geertz 1976: 5] as they manifest in the Philippines. The training was intense, and Paolo would switch methods of, and metaphors used in, instruction whenever one of us failed to achieve what was being asked of us. Both Rebekah and Robert developed blisters on the palm from the intensity of the stick routines, a common experience for those first starting out in De Campo, especially when training in the tropical climate of the Philippines. De Campo training itself was also very informal. There is no bowing or salutes in De Campo, and although students will sometimes refer to an instructor by their title, it is just as common to use their first name, or a Filipino term of respect and endearment such as “manong” or “mang”. If a uniform is worn at all, it consists of a black t-shirt with the art’s logo in the centre of the chest; a pair of shorts; and footwear among Filipino teachers is typically *tsinelas* (slippers, or what are called elsewhere “flip flops”). On returning to Australia, Robert and Rebekah started teaching De Campo to their students, with Paolo’s encouragement, as he believes strongly that teaching improves one’s understanding of the art; being formally certified over twenty months later, after an intuitive capacity with the De Campo techniques had been reached. As a result of the global pandemic normalising online training, for at least the past 12 months, Robert, Rebekah and their students have taken advantage of the possibility of online interactive training, by engaging in weekly zoom sessions led by both Maestro Paolo and Master Jomalin. In each case, the De Campo curriculum, as set down by the founder, Professor Jose Caballero, forms the foundation of the online training.

In many ways, the art’s pedagogical culture fits a traditional model of imitation and repetition, with a focus on the correction of technique. There is a great deal of form work (practice in the air), and then the application with a partner who wears a hand protector and feeds strikes that the defender will attempt to counterstrike. This is sometimes performed with ‘live’ sticks but may be done with padded sticks if they are available. In all drills, the pace starts slow and picks up as your skill builds. Controlled sparring drills follow, usually involving technical or targeting constraints, in order to enhance particular skills or attributes. The signature pedagogy of the system, as already noted, involved not only lots of repetition of the techniques outlined in the curriculum, but also a dedication to embodying the kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities of the system. Of course, repetition alone becomes problematic, if one is not actively working on embodying the kinetic-aesthetics with every strike. When we performed

a movement correctly, Paolo would say “Yes, that’s De Campo!” As Bowman has rightfully argued, embodiment always implies “the performative and interpretive elaboration of something *other* that is received, perceived, felt, constructed, believed, assumed or otherwise lived as being either an aim, ideal, desire, objective, fantasy, or as a norm” [Bowman 2019: 75, emphasis in the original]; and in the case of De Campo pedagogy, this involves careful embodiment of the system’s kinetic-aesthetics.

When one sees De Campo performed for the first time, it is likely that the first thing that will draw one’s attention is that the De Campo stylist slaps their own arm during the execution of certain strikes. Comments on social media platforms suggest that many people who see and hear the slapping movements assume that the De Campo practitioner is somehow beat-boxing or creating a soundtrack for their own performance, as if they intend to make their strikes sound more powerful. This *pikpik* (bicep tapping) movement is one of a number of signature techniques of the system, and can be seen in other systems De Campo has influenced, such as Eskrima De Campo JDC-IO, Estokada De Campo, Eskrima PPZ / 1-2-3 De Campo Heneral, and LAMECO Eskrima. It is not entirely unique to De Campo, but in combination with other signature techniques (such as those we will explore below), gives De Campo a distinctive quality of movement. Ignore the *pikpik* on any strike that travels from an *abierta* (open guard) towards a *serrada* (closed guard) position, and one’s strikes cease to have the De Campo look and feel. Likewise, strikes travelling from the closed guard to the open position are coupled with a *tukmod* (shoving) action that travels forward and away from the body. Together with the art’s *abante* (advancing) and *atras* (withdrawing) body weight shifting that is sometimes coupled with *dakinas* (sliding) footwork, the *pikpik* and *tukmod* give the De Campo practitioner’s movement a kind of visible pulsing effect and internal pulsating affect, leading Robert to exclaim while training in Manila, that “De Campo feels like the closest thing I have ever experienced to *fajing* with a stick”, a view affirmed by Paolo and Rebekah because of all three researchers prior experience with ‘*fajing*’ (the explosive discharge of power through sudden expansion and contraction in Chinese martial arts and systems influenced by them).

Another signature kinetic-aesthetic of De Campo can be seen in what is called in Cebuano Eskrima systems *hayang* and *kulob* [Nepangue, Macachor 2007]. *Hayang* refers to the wrist/forearm resting in a supine (or from the practitioner’s viewpoint a ‘palm facing’) position, while *kulob* refers to the wrist/forearm resting in a prone (or again from a practitioner’s viewpoint a ‘back of hand facing’) position. Assuming a right-handed eskrimador – which I will do throughout this paper – full strikes coming from the *abierta* or ‘open’ right-hand side should commence and contact the intended target

in *hayang*, but finish on the left-hand side in *kulob*. Full strikes coming from the *serrada* or ‘closed’ left-hand side should commence and contact the intended target in *kulob*, but finish on the right-hand side in *hayang*. As a general rule, this involves allowing the wrist to flick in (for *kulob*) or out (for *hayang*) at the tail end of the striking motion. An even more subtle aspect of the kinetic-aesthetic that concludes the striking motion is ending in a guard where the stick is parallel to the floor for high or ‘out of scabbard’ guards, and with the tip pointing to the floor in the low or ‘in-scabbard’ guard position, depending on what striking pattern you are likely to go into next (high guard for downward strikes, low guard for upward strikes).

In addition to these fundamental kinetic-aesthetics of the De Campo system, one may also recognise the art by its rapid-fire combination of striking techniques, its combination of half strike and full circular strike counters (called *kadlit* or ‘striking a match’ in the derivative Eskrima De Campo JDC-IO system), and its *dakinas* (sliding) and *kinto* (tip-toed) footwork, closer to a boxer’s footwork than the triangular stepping methods found in many other FMA systems. Each of these kinetic-aesthetics form part of the art’s signature look and feel. However, these kinetic-aesthetics are not simply there for show, and this is where our kinaesthetic anthropology can assist with developing a deeper understanding of the De Campo system and the intended outcome of its emphasis on this unique configuration of kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities.

### Kinaesthetic anthropology in practice: Practice as research

For one of the authors, studying De Campo in Manila led her to an experience of being powerful with a stick for the first time. Powerful striking is certainly one of the experiences that emerges from the study of De Campo methods. In De Campo practice, as already noted, strikes should be executed with full power and intention where possible [Gould 2014], or “Specialization of ALERTNESS (Kaabtik)”, which Sulite [1986: 219, emphasis in the original] identified as a key aspect of De Campo training. However, the experience of powerful striking isn’t simply a function of mental attitude. De Campo’s kinetic-aesthetics build a relationship between footwork, body movement, and striking angle, that move the practitioner through a stage where they are unable to proprioceptively determine if they are moving the stick, or the stick is moving them. This is facilitated at the fundamental level – there is more flexibility at later stages of training – by moving forward or to the right on strikes that finish in *abierta* (the open position) and withdrawing or moving to the left on strikes that finish in *serrada* (the closed position). Along with moving

one's body in the direction of the strike in this fashion, the *tukmod* and *pikpik* techniques mentioned earlier, help to create a counterbalancing pulse that conserves momentum in the movement, through an action almost like the performance of breaststroke in swimming. This rocking motion has the added advantage of keeping one's head a moving target, appearing to serve a function like the bob and weave in boxing.

Through the proprioceptive interrogation of *pikpik*, it becomes obvious that counterbalancing is not the only function it serves. If a martial artist was using a rope dart, or hinged weapon such as a nunchaku, they would need to wrap the weapon around their body to arrest its motion before it could be sent back out to lash at the opponent. The purpose of *pikpik* is rarely discussed. However, its mindful practice through what Jose Caballero is said to have called “the training mode” or where “the body listened to every movement it made as it related to the weapon, the surroundings, and the imagined or visualised opponent” [Olavides 2018: 34], is revealing. When a De Campo stylist executes the *pikpik* bicep tapping motion, our kinaesthetic experience of the movement suggests they are providing a fulcrum around which their strike can wrap, and thus be sent back out to strike again at the opponent. Rather than have the stick travel all the way to their own back to achieve this, the *pikpik* action means the momentum of the stick is intercepted almost immediately after its intersection (or impact) with the target. This saves valuable micro-seconds and allows the De Campo practitioner to return their follow up strike faster than would be possible if it had to travel all the way to their own back (like the nunchaku would). Practice with a heavier stick will often make this more apparent. By its nature, the *pikpik* also tends to shorten the arc of the strike's follow through, accelerating the tip of the weapon, adding to the speed of recovery. The subjective experience of practicing *pikpik*, is precisely an increase in striking velocity (especially of the strike that follows on from the rebound of the *pikpik*).

Like *pikpik*, the *hayang-kulob* kinetic-aesthetic identified earlier as a signature feature of De Campo also has a part to play in the system's high velocity or ‘meteoric’ [Sulite 1986: 219] striking methodology. Watching eskrimadors during freeplay sparring matches reveals a tendency towards bringing a stick back into a ‘chamber’ position before launching each strike. Most FMA systems certainly have fluid ways of achieving this. In the High School curriculum of De Campo a special drill called *Hagad Hubad* (which literally means something like ‘invite and undress’, but is often translated uncomfortably as ‘attack & defence’) utilises the *hayang-kulob* action in an interesting way. The drill starts with both feeder and defender adopting an *abierta* (open) guard, and by having the feeder throw a downward diagonal forehand strike towards the left-side of the defender's head. The defender meets the strike with their own half-strike, with their

wrist in a *hayang* position. Having met the strike, they switch their wrist into a *kulob* position while attempting a second counterstrike either to the hand of the feeder, or to their elbow or head. Regardless of whether or not this second strike makes contact, the defender then switches their wrist again into a *hayang* position and continues with a full strike typically towards the opponent's head and then completes the strike by closing into a *kulob* position. When the feeder then strikes from a *serrada* (closed) position, the entire action is reversed, with the defender meeting the strike with their own half strike in a *kulob* position, switching to *hayang* for the follow-up counter, then back into *kulob* for the finishing strike, and flicking out into *hayang* to complete the action. The final flick in or out allows a full range of motion in which the power of the strike is not arbitrarily arrested. Further, what is most evident from the mindful practice of the *Hagad Hubad* drill is this constant oscillation between *hayang* and *kulob*, and the experiential insight that this is allowing the De Campo stylist to strike three times without bringing their stick back into ‘chamber’; and to quickly change direction if he sees an opponent start to counter, allowing him continue to strike unimpeded. The drill is also practiced to enhance this countermeasure action, by having the De Campo stylist through an initial baiting strike, and when their opponent goes to counter them by a strike to their hand, then flip their wrist, removing their hand from the path of the attack, possibly countering their opponent's hand in the same action, then flipping again to offer an immediate finishing strike. Again like *pikpik*, the *hayang-kulob* motion is not simply an aesthetic without combative function. On the contrary, this kinetic-aesthetic technique shaves additional micro-seconds off the time it takes to recover from one strike to the next, increasing the number of strikes that can normally be thrown within a set time frame. The effectiveness of these techniques in part relies on a rebounding force caused by bouncing against the bicep tap in *pikpik*, or against the opponent or their weapon in *hagad-hubad*, bringing us to another important kinetic-aesthetic of De Campo.

A third fundamental kinetic-aesthetic of the De Campo system appears in four of the five techniques of the Primary/Elementary curriculum. In the techniques known as *Group 2 De Alfavito*, *Group 3 Horizontal*, *Group 4 Serrada*, and *Group 5 Abierta*, a half strike makes contact with the target, only to be followed by an immediate full strike. In the *De Alfavito* technique, the half strike sticks to the target, and then is pulled away to complete the full strike. In *Horizontal*, *Serrada* and *Abierta*, the initial half strike bounces back from contact with the target, and then is immediately followed with a full strike; either in the same direction, as is the case with *Horizontal*, or in the opposite direction through a circular movement in the case of *Serrada* and *Abierta*. This hit-bounce-hit (or rebounding) effect created within each



of these techniques uses the force of the initial contact to power the momentum of the follow up strike. Once again, the kinetic-aesthetic being trained allows a second strike to follow the first without requiring the weapon to be re-chambered between striking actions. In the technique known as *Group 6 De Campo Original*, a third finishing strike is added to this pattern; and the name of the technique, echoing the name of the art itself, suggests its clear importance in the system, with three strikes in quick succession being the effect. Clearly, through our kinaesthetic archaeological exploration of De Campo a pattern is emerging.

Jose Caballero is known to have encouraged his pupils to “strike first and strike last, even when your opponent initiates the attack” [Gould 2014: 15]. He is said to have been a fan of Western gunslinger movies and likened his De Campo system to the equivalent of “the quick draw” [Dowd 2006: 4]. Lightning fast three strike combinations have been described as his “trademark” [Dowd 2006: 5]. A recent meme circulating on social media quotes him as saying: *Ingon ana ang mobunal. Morag mopatay ug halas nga buot mopaak nimo* (“That is how you strike. Like killing a snake that wants to bite you.” Authors’ translation), suggesting the importance of speed, timing, power, and whip if one is to strike effectively. Precision, power, timing, and speed are thus important attributes to be cultivated in De Campo training. It could be argued that even the tip toward the ground aesthetic (or ‘hanging guard’) in the stances of De Campo facilitates rapid striking by enabling the shoulder to relax in both the *abierta* and *serrada* guard positions, allowing for fast non-telegraphic movement from the ‘holstered’ position; as well as being an obvious ‘baiting’ technique designed to lure the opponent into striking towards an opening that you are ready to protect with a prepared counter (allowing you to appear even faster than you may be). This is certainly the introspective, and sparring-based experience of the authors of this paper. Importantly, the findings from our kinaesthetic anthropology, are consistent with the expressed intentions of the founder, to propagate an FMA system in which powerful lightning-fast combination striking is considered of primary strategic importance.

### **Conclusion: Kinetic-aesthetic embodiment as a technology of the self, and the implications of our kinaesthetic anthropology**

The knowledge presented in this paper has been derived through research, conducted from a hermeneutic-phenomenological standpoint, in the form of immersive practice with a view to mastery, the kinaesthetic interrogation of technique, and the investigation of the known history of the art’s lineage and its founder. Within this investigation, the kinetic-aesthetic techniques of De

Campo have held centre stage. Spatz has argued that:

Embodied technique is *objective* in that it can only be developed out of the field of what is materially possible for bodies to do; it is *relative* in that this field is infinitely complex (fractal), and so admits of an infinite number of possible discoveries; and it is *historical* in that particular lines of inquiry give rise to particular discoveries at particular times and places. [Spatz 2015: 60-61]

While we are confident in our claims, we recognise our knowledge of any martial arts system as always being provisional, relative to our own engagement with its pedagogies, techniques, and kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities. For example, we have said nothing about the relationship of De Campo techniques to bladework. Thus, we always remain open to revisions and new insights as we deepen our own practice, or change the question, problem, or focus that guides our investigations.

In our efforts to embody, preserve, and renew the De Campo system of Filipino Martial Arts, we find ourselves in a similar position as that outlined by the poststructural historian, Michel Foucault. Like Foucault [1983], we find “the idea of the *bios* as a material for an aesthetic piece of art” as fascinating [p. 348]. In an interview with Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus, Foucault went on to say:

What strikes me is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something which is specialized or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn’t everyone’s life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life? [Foucault 1983: 350]

Martial arts are an excellent example of practices through which the individual treats themselves as their own work of art. We have described kinetic-aesthetic imitation as a signature pedagogy of De Campo, a fact that is obvious when one compares the movement of the current heir, Master Jomalin Caballero, to video material of his late father, Grandmaster Manuel ‘Mawe’ Caballero, and finds their performance uncannily similar; and that is reinforced in the stories of repetitive practice and fine tuning shared by those who have visited Toledo to train with the Caballero family (like Paolo Pagaling), or who have (like Robert & Rebekah Parkes) experienced feedback from Master Jomalin and Maestro Paolo on the subtle kinetic-aesthetics of the system that need to be fine-tuned by anyone seeking to represent or teach the system. Of course, technical imitation is not at all unique to De Campo and may indeed be a signature pedagogy of most (if not all) martial arts, both in the Philippines and beyond. However, we have been careful to use the idea of the kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities of the art under study, rather than simply the idea of ‘technique’ as there is certainly a strong pedagogical emphasis in De Campo

training on what some may perceive as simply affectations (whose real purpose may be lost). As O’Leary has argued, the self “is a form which is constituted through practices that are always specific to particular social and historical contexts” [O’Leary 2002: 111], and there is something quite specific in the kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities of De Campo that mean without a serious intent to embrace and embody the art’s kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities, the achievement of the founder’s strategy to “strike first, and strike last” [Gould 2014: 15] or to strike like you want to kill a snake, will remain elusive. Of course, this also needs to be coupled with drills, found in the De Campo system, that involve the immediate launching of a blistering barrage of strikes the moment your opponent shows any intent to strike, a preference over initiating an attack which could leave the practitioner vulnerable themselves to a well-timed counter.

As Foucault [1980/1982/1994] has argued, agency arises only through subjection. Like Butler, we understand ‘subjection’ to mean both “subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject” [Butler 1997: 2]. Subjection (to or through a discipline) thus has a double nature in Foucault’s theorizing, whereby its constraining effects are precisely that which produces and enables particular capabilities [Parkes 2010]. The martial artist comes to reflect the standard form of a specific combative system, precisely by willingly subjecting themselves to a discipline of technique-imitation and kinetic-aesthetic embodiment. Lovret has made the point that while many martial arts schools teach a person new things “the goal of a *dojo* is to transform the person into something new” [Lovret 1987: 14]. Wilful subjection involving “aesthetic self-stylization” [Markula, Pringle 2006: 154], or in the martial arts as “artistic self-cultivation” [Downey 2014: 249], is a ‘technology of the self’ [Foucault 1994: 223-225] that is used by the practitioner to attain a particular set of desired capabilities. As Downey has noted:

The study of sports, dance, musical apprenticeship, and similar physical practices makes clear that skill is not simply the ‘embodiment’ of ‘knowledge’, but rather physical, neurological, perceptual, and behavioural change of the individual subject so that he or she can accomplish tasks that, prior to enskilment, were impossible. [Downey 2008: 210]

This has been particularly obvious for us in De Campo training because of its pedagogical emphasis on the repetition of exacting form, and the new capacities that have emerged from working to master its technical and kinetic-aesthetic specificities. As we have already noted, during De Campo training with Paolo in Manila, and later online via zoom, he would frequently use the phrase “Yes! That’s De Campo!” if and when we had clearly been able to accurately replicate the art’s kinetic-aesthetics which encouraged us (Robert & Rebekah) to proprioceptively attend to our actions at that exact

moment, assisting us to continue to refine our movement, and express ourselves somatically in a De Campo register.

At this point, it should be noted that treating kinetic-aesthetic imitation and embodiment as a pedagogical strategy does not mean there is no freedom of expression. On the contrary, the kinetic-aesthetics of an FMA system are its vocabulary and “generative grammar of movement” [Green 2013: 130], and through such devices, one comes to communicate freely, albeit through a specific ‘language’ form. The ‘use’ of this grammar and vocabulary allows the construction of new and unique constellations of movements, that are recognisably the language of the FMA system being drawn upon but are simultaneously unique moments of personal expression. Through our kinaesthetic anthropology of De Campo, it becomes apparent that the genius of the founder, Jose Caballero, is demonstrated through his stacking or nesting a series of related tactics upon each other, manifested through specific kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities, that offered a chance for the eskrimador to realise the De Campo strategy of high velocity combination striking, that would provide possibilities in the *Juego Todo* for the De Campo practitioner to hit the opponent first, even if responding in a counter-striking mode. Each of the kinetic-aesthetic techniques we explored: *pikpik-tukmod* bicep tapping and shoving, *hayang-kulob* wrist oscillation, and the bouncing or rebounding effect of combining half-strikes and full strikes, works to shave recovery time between strikes. This is consistent, as we have indicated, with Jose Caballero’s stated training and combat philosophies. While there are undoubtedly personal benefits to engaging in a dedicated embodiment of De Campo’s kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities, these kinetic-aesthetics are more than novel affectations, and the rewards of embodying them go beyond the development of personal combative stick-fighting skills, to participation in the preservation and renewal of a unique aspect of Filipino martial heritage.

In this paper, we have presented kinaesthetic anthropology as a useful methodology for investigating the lived proprioceptive experience of practicing certain technical aspects of De Campo, a FMA system that survived from the *Juego Todo* era, but that has been in danger of being lost, and whose kinetic-aesthetic peculiarities have often been misunderstood. We want to conclude by recommending kinaesthetic anthropology as a research method that has particular value for the purpose of interrogating and documenting martial art systems. We have identified kinaesthetic anthropology as requiring engagement in what Samudra [2008: 667] calls “thick participation”, and underscored the importance of what we have described as *immersive practice with a view to mastery*. We recognise that this should be understood as a form of willing subjection in order to realise the promises of the system under study. Such an approach not only allows for deeper insights than those which can be gained by dabbling or sitting on the sidelines, as we have already argued, but

also engages respectfully with the martial art systems and practices being investigated, by engaging from a genuine commitment to mastery, that has the potential not only to document, but to contribute to the renewal and preservation of these endangered intangible cultural assets.

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### **Antropologia kinestetyczna, ucieleśnienie kinetyczno-estetyczne i zachowanie tradycji systemu filipińskich sztuk walki *De Campo 123 Original***

**Słowa kluczowe:** filipińskie sztuki walki, antropologia kinestetyczna, ucieleśnienie, filipińskie dziedzictwo kulturowe, nowa hopologia, pedagogika sygnaturowa

#### **Streszczenie**

Problem. Niniejszy artykuł bada wysoce wpływowy, ale nie powszechnie praktykowany, system filipińskich sztuk walki, *De Campo 123 Original*, który przetrwał z ery Juego Todo pojedynków na kije na Filipinach, ale był zagrożony wymarciem, reprezentując utratę niematerialnego filipińskiego dziedzictwa kulturowego. Sztukę tę można

rozpoznać po jej kinetyczno-estetycznych osobliwościach, które często są błędnie rozumiane jako zwykła afektacja. Metoda. Przyjęte zostało podejście hermeneutyczno-fenomenologiczne, które nazywamy „antropologią kinestetyczną”, zakładające „gęste uczestnictwo” [Samudra 2008], w którym wiedza kulturowa zapisana w ciele praktyka-badacza staje się przedmiotem badań. Szczególną uwagę poświęca się badaniu trzech kinetyczno-estetycznych osobliwości systemu *De Campo*. Spostrzeżenia są rozwijane poprzez *immersyjną praktykę w celu osiągnięcia mistrzostwa* i rozpatrywane w odniesieniu do kontekstu historycznego i filozofii twórcy systemu.

Wyniki. Eksploatacja unikalnych kinetyczno-estetycznych osobliwości systemu *De Campo* ujawnia, że są one czymś więcej niż tylko idiosynkratycznymi afektami, a zamiast tego są technikami, które konsekwentnie skracają czas pomiędzy uderzeniami, pozwalając ćwiczącemu na wyprowadzenie większej ilości uderzeń w krótszym czasie, zgodnie z udokumentowaną filozofią założyciela systemu „szybkiego losowania” i historycznymi okolicznościami pojedynków Juego Todo, w których sztuka ta została rozwinięta.

Wnioski. Autorzy twierdzą, że „kinestetyczna antropologia” obejmująca skupienie się na kinetyczno-estetycznym ucieleśnieniu, ułatwionym przez *immersyjną praktykę z myślą o mistrzostwie*, nie tylko pozwala na głębsze spostrzeżenia niż te, które można uzyskać przez nieformalne podejście lub obserwacje z dystansu, ale także angażuje się z szacunkiem w systemy i praktyki sztuki walki, które są badane. Ma także potencjał, aby udokumentować i przyczynić się do odnowienia i zachowania zagrożonych systemów sztuk walki, które często stanowią niematerialne dobra kultury.