

STICKS AND SPIRIT: UNDERSTANDING THE ART OF ARNIS

by:

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Recognized as the national martial art and sport of the Philippines, Arnis – also referred to as Eskrima or Kali – is a traditional Filipino combat system that blends weapon-based techniques with unarmed defense. It is valued for its cultural and historical significance in addition to its useful fighting skills. Arnis, which is practiced with rattan sticks, focuses on control, discipline, and self-defense. Arnis, which has its origins in ancient warrior traditions and has developed over centuries of colonization and modernity, is more than just a physical sport; it is a reflection of the Filipino people's tenacity and spirit. In 2009, Republic Act No. 9850 officially designated Arnis as the national martial art, signifying a renewed national commitment to its preservation and promotion.

Arnis is a martial art that uses sticks, knives, or empty hands to teach striking, blocking, and disarming skills. It works well in real-world scenarios due to its versatility and agility, especially for self-defense in close quarters. The focus on both weapon-based and empty-hand combat, where practitioners learn to transfer weapon methods into unarmed motions, is what distinguishes Arnis from many other martial arts. This dual skill development promotes mental agility and strategic thinking in addition to physical coordination (Sarabia, 2017).

As a component of the physical education curriculum, Arnis has gained popularity in Philippine schools in recent years. Teachers hope to foster in their children a sense of patriotism, cultural awareness, and physical literacy by including Arnis into the K-12 curriculum (Dela Cruz, 2016). It encourages respect, discipline, and physical fitness while

providing an easy way to experience the nation's rich cultural legacy. By redefining Arnis as a useful teaching instrument based on identity and character development, the organized instruction of the sport in schools also dispels the myth that it is an antiquated or violent activity.

Arnis is a living example of the Filipino spirit of adaptability and resistance in terms of culture. The art has been passed down through the generations, sometimes in secrecy because of colonial persecution, and has historically been employed by warriors to protect against foreign invaders. By fusing ancient knowledge with contemporary teaching methods, contemporary practitioners and educators are attempting to revitalize and conserve a variety of regional styles and methodologies (Garcia, 2020). With expanding groups in the United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia, Arnis is becoming more and more well-known worldwide as a useful and successful martial art.

In the end, Arnis represents Filipino identity, tenacity, and inventiveness and is more than just a sport. Arnis promotes a disciplined, conscious, and respectful attitude toward one's history, regardless of whether it is practiced for self-defense, physical well-being, or cultural ties. The spirit of Arnis endures as it develops in both domestic and international settings: it is anchored in history, driven by fervor, and directed by the Filipino ideals it so proudly embodies.

References:

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