

INTRODUCTION

For knife enthusiasts and fighters, our romance with the art of knife fighting begins with our respect for its main prowess: the ability to cut. Long before it was part of an art, it was a tool born as a major technological advancement, and even now, more than two million years since it was invented, it is still one of the enduring man-made creations.

As the imagination of man evolved alongside with the passion for knives, knives evolved as far as the extent of our creativeness. From what used to be a stone tool fashioned out of tedious and meticulous stone flaking, it is now a tool or weapon forged with a variety of metal. The shape itself adapted to the purpose of their use, where they were once tools they are now also weapons.

As a weapon, man contemplated on ways to be more efficient in fighting with knives. We figured ways to hold, wield, slash and thrust better, and from that, we developed techniques and form. After forms, we developed systems, and in the midst of all of this, the art form of knife fighting is conceived. The diversity of human conditions sprouted a wide variety of knife fighting forms, where each form is an adaptation from the circumstances where the founder or founding group of the art is originated from. Factors such as the availability of material and culture play a role in both the shape of the knife and the outcome of the art form.

In the Kingdom of Sicily, knife fighting evolved into an art named *La scherma di stiletto siciliano* (the Sicilian school of stiletto fighting) where fighters use stilettos, an elongated knife or dagger, mainly for stabbing or thrusting. In South America, gauchos popularized the art form *Esgrima Criolla* (Creole Fencing), a knife fighting method that is fought with a knife on one hand and a poncho to cover the other. From the island of Java, the karambit, where its shape was rumored to be a mimicry of a claw, soon became a staple weaponry in Silat and the Filipino Martial Arts.

In the exceptional case in the Philippines, the art of knife fighting evolved in par with the Filipino culture, also referred to as the Blade Culture. The art adapted the Filipino's practical nature where each movement is designed to be as efficient it could be. The earliest and famous known record of how effective the FMA knife fighting system was with the story of Lapu Lapu and his clan who successfully fended off the Spaniards with their blade fighting system, and ever since then, the art progressed tremendously up to our times. Nowadays, the legacy of the Blade Culture is perpetuated and improved through the teachings of modern day FMA masters.

The evolution of how man perceives the knife had gone far from what used to be a mere tool also became a weapon that adapted to man's growing demands. The different art knife fighting form that came about, and with man's enduring passion, will continue to improve hand in hand with man's needs.

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