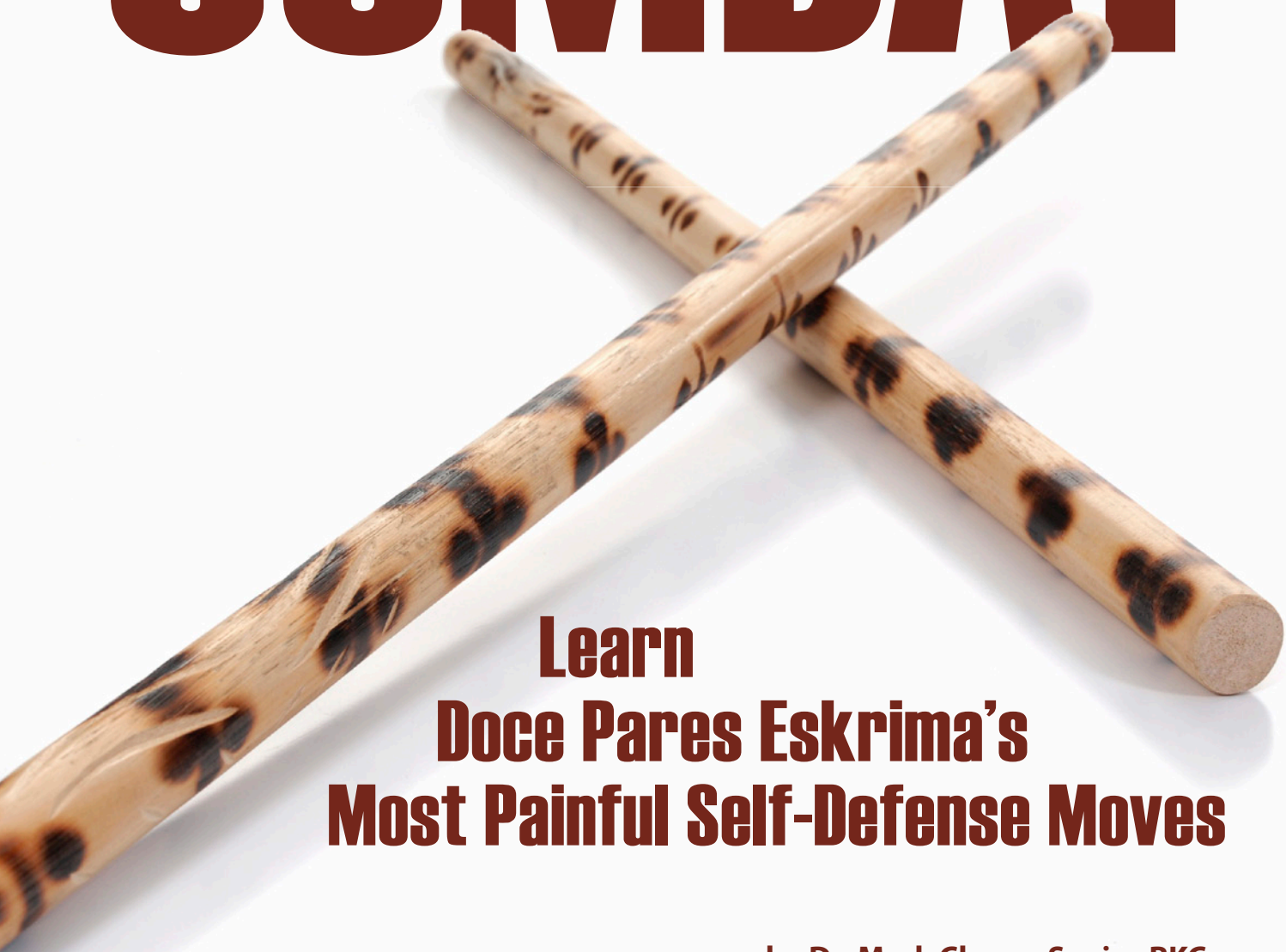


# STICK COMBAT



**Learn  
Doce Pares Eskrima's  
Most Painful Self-Defense Moves**

PHOTOS BY BRUCE W. LEBAHN

by Dr. Mark Cheng, Senior RKC

*Some definite perks come with my job as a contributing editor for Black Belt. Having the opportunity to meet and train with Christopher Petrilli is near the top of the list. The soft-spoken former Army Ranger is one of the highest-ranked students of doce pares eskrima headmaster Ciriaco “Cacoy” Cañete, yet his skill with a stick has its own unique flavor. Petrilli is one of the most meticulous instructors of real-world stick combatives, and his stick-lock and compression concepts are destined to pave the way for a whole new take on baton training, especially for members of the police and military.*

— M.C.

**P**hilippine stick fighting has firmly entrenched itself in the landscape of the American martial arts. For more than 30 years, the styles from that Southeast Asian nation have gradually gained wider acceptance and recognition, in no small part because of the efforts and skills of men like Dan Inosanto. *Aikido* expert Steven Seagal managed to work a Filipino-style stick battle — with Inosanto as his opponent — into 1991’s *Out for Justice*. Nearly every martial arts video producer has at least a series or two of stick-fighting instructional tapes, and you’d be hard-pressed to find a supply store that doesn’t carry an assortment of rattan sticks.

Despite the ubiquity of Filipino-style instructors — who may teach baton techniques under labels as diverse as *jeet kune do* concepts, *kali*, *arnis*, *eskrima* and *silat* — innovations are still being made to the science of the stick. Hard at work in the laboratory of hard knocks is Christopher Petrilli. He trained for years in the Philippines under the

watchful eye of Ciriaco “Cacoy” Cañete, the oldest surviving member of the Doce Pares Club, and he now holds an eighth-degree black belt in the *doce pares* system.

Petrilli’s skills aren’t limited to *eskrima*, however. The Sedona, Arizona-based instructor has also trained in *Aikikai aikido* and *silat*, and his roster of friends reads like a *Who’s Who* of Southeast Asian martial arts. However, his varied background hasn’t conflicted with his loyalty to *doce pares* or his teacher, and his particular understanding of stick combat is recognized by Cañete himself.

Cañete’s background included judo, *ju-jitsu* and wrestling, making him a formidable grappler. That influenced his branch of *doce pares eskrima* and was reflected in the joint locks, throws and takedowns common in his demonstrations. He’s noted for being one of the few men who can skillfully and smoothly execute judo-style techniques and sweeps without having to drop his stick. Such knowledge, when combined with Petrilli’s aikido

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*Punyo punishment: After deflecting Sherri Johnson's stick and trapping her wrist, Christopher Petrilli (left) sets the butt end of his weapon in the crook of her elbow and flexes her arm (1). He effects a compression lock by applying pressure to the bent limb with the stick in place (2). Petrilli then executes a quick clockwise spin (3), taking her down and exposing her to a face strike (4).*

background, formed the perfect breeding ground for a new kind of stick fighting.

### More Than Just a Bludgeon

While teaching his students the doce pares method of eskrima, *eskrido* and *pan-gamot* (Cañete's empty-hand-vs.-stick system), Petrilli doesn't skip over the impact capacity of the blunt weapon. "It's obvious to most people that you can beat someone with a stick if you so choose," he says. "What isn't always obvious, even to people with martial arts training, is how to do the joint locks, throws and grappling techniques you learned in empty-hand training while making the best use of the stick."

Part of the secret lies in how Petrilli grips his sticks. Most practitioners hold their weap-

ons close to the end, creating a minimal *punyo* (butt end). Yet doce pares people tend to hold theirs with enough distance between their hand and the butt end to approximate the size of a dagger. That added length gives them an advantage in close-range combat for two reasons: It shortens the length of the forward end of the stick just enough to make it easier to maneuver in tight spaces without compromising too much of its striking length at long range; and it adds a striking, stabbing, pressing and hooking implement to the reverse end, allowing a variety of controls and manipulations to be executed.

Indeed, close range is where most of Petrilli's teaching takes place. During a backyard training session, he's quick to explain the relevant rationale: "At long range, most people





*Compression choke: Christopher Petrilli (right) attempts a ni-kyo lock, but his opponent maneuvers to lessen the force (1). He abandons the wrist lock and shoots in to elbow her in the face and capture her neck with his stick (2). He then extends his left arm to grasp the far end of the stick and uses his forearm to complete the choke (3).*

are just going to wave their sticks back and forth until someone makes contact, either with the other person's stick or somewhere on his body. It's at this point that the battle is joined.

"If I stay outside and continue to twirl my stick around, it's pretty unlikely that I'll get past the other guy's weapon and close enough to do any real damage to his head, vital organs or joints. But if I make use of the moment the sticks collide, I can use that information as a signal to 'crash the gate' and get inside to do work."

### **Up Close and Personal**

Once in close range, *hubud-lubud* training is conducted. Widely seen as the Philippine's answer to *wing chun* kung fu's sticky-hands drills, *hubud* can be employed with empty

hands, sticks or knives — unlike its Chinese counterpart. This is the range at which Petrilli's real gift, "stick locking," starts to shine. Watching him train with his students at long range, it's anyone's guess as to who has the advantage. Petrilli is of shorter stature, so in dealing with a taller, longer-limbed opponent, it doesn't make sense for him to stay outside and fence. However, when he crashes in on his adversary, the tables turn radically, and a loud slap emanates from the mat after a large blur goes airborne.

After watching that take place a few times, I walk onto the mat to feel the techniques for myself. Starting from *hubud* range, Petrilli sets me up with a series of quick strikes that flow immediately into a grab, redirection, lock, throw and submission hold — usually one of his trademark "compressions." Con-

vinced by firsthand experience of the viability of his techniques, I ask him to explain the methodology behind them.

Petrilli humbly points out that his understanding of things is nothing new: "Plenty of martial arts have locking techniques involving sticks. Gene LeBell has grappling techniques with a club [see the July 2004 issue of *Black Belt*], traditional aikido has *jo* (medium-length staff) techniques, *hwa rang do* has cane techniques, and everyone has seen some sort of locking techniques involving the Okinawan *tonfa* in the form of the PR-24 side-handle baton."

Yet his synthesis of stick fighting and locking/grappling techniques is something original. To watch him work single-stick methods at close range is akin to watching someone operate with four arms, a pair of pliers, a baseball bat and a catapult all at the same time.

His compression holds serve as the pliers in the arsenal. "Imagine how pliers or a nutcracker works; that's a similar principle to how compressions work," he explains. Using the joint created by the meeting of his hand and the stick, he uses his forearm, usually the ulnar side, and the shaft of the stick to crush any unlucky limb.

"Anything the opponent leaves exposed is fair game," he says. "Any part of the body that would be susceptible to pain from pressure is a perfect victim for compressions."

### Feel the Pain

To illustrate his point, he takes my arm and applies compressions from my wrist up to my neck, causing me to tap or scream in agony when my other hand cannot react quickly enough to tap.

Much like the way pliers are used not only to grip but also to twist, compressions can give rise to manipulations. They're used to lead an

opponent into a different orientation, such as a throw or submission position. That's one of the areas in which Petrilli's stick work shines most brilliantly — by implementing aikido-style grips, turns, throws and locks without compromising the efficacy of the stick-holding hand. Indeed, his techniques capitalize on the stick as an extra limb or an added fulcrum, leading the opponent into an almost inescapable world of pure pain.

Just when the adversary is thinking he's in a world of hurt, the extra punyo length comes into play. "If he blocks your stick hand at the forearm, you're not confined to just using strikes; you can clamp down on his extended limb and instantly turn the tables," Petrilli says as he snags my wrist in a compression, dropping me to the mat with my arm bent as if it's being tortured by an aikido-style *nikyo* lock. His locking techniques, which seemingly come at me from all angles, have the feel of aikido gone tropical as his burn-decorated



*In the hands of a doce pares eskrima practitioner, the stick can be used for grappling as readily as for bludgeoning.*





*Stick lock into reverse drop: After seizing his adversary's wrist and placing his stick in the crook of her elbow, doce pares eskrima expert Christopher Petrilli (left) sets the end of it over his left forearm (1). He then switches his right hand to the opposite end of the weapon (2), which allows him to torque the stick upward (3). Next, he releases her wrist as he circles away from her stick hand (4), after which he grabs it again with his left hand to create a compression lock (5). The pain causes her to fall to the mat (6).*





*The key to executing many doce pares eskrima techniques is to hold the stick so that part of it protrudes below the gripping hand.*

rattan stick switches effortlessly from striking to locking to throwing.

### **Tip of the Iceberg**

The throwing aspect of Petrilli's science is another selling point. Just like every grappling art relies on leverage to pitch an adversary into the air or onto the ground, he makes maximum use of the natural lever that the stick is — using it to draw his opponent in by virtue of its greater reach, to grind against pressure points with its hard surfaces, to clamp down unforgettingly on a limb like an extra arm and to flip him like a catapult.

Petrilli relates a story about how he came to learn these secrets from Cañete, who has been frequently photographed flipping adversaries while engaged in stick work: "When I was living in [Los Angeles], I asked around, trying to see who people thought the best guy to train under in the Philippines was. People in the know told me a bunch of different things, but if I wanted to learn how to really fight, [they said] I should go to Cacoy Cañete.

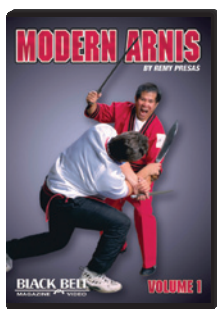
"So I packed up, headed straight for his place and lived there with him for a few years. He's one of the few guys who's really been there and done that, so I know what comes from him is real. He isn't afraid to show you that his skills work with incredible versatility. He can whack you on the side of the head, knock your stick out of your hand, crank your wrist and hurl you across the room in one smooth flow. Not many guys alive have [reached] that level."

Petrilli's special brand of doce pares eskrima may well be the best tool for police and security personnel who can't afford to use excessive force because of the legal implications. It gives them effective alternatives to the traditional percussion-only methods of dealing with resisting suspects. It blends the smooth locks, throws and submissions of aikido with the well-rounded striking and grappling skills of Cañete's combat-proven art.

If it works for people who are limited by law as to how they can defend themselves, imagine what it can do for you. ✖



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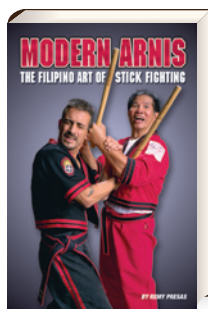
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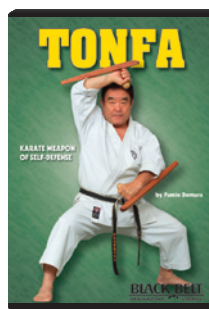
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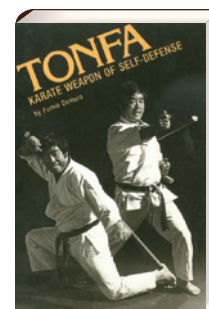
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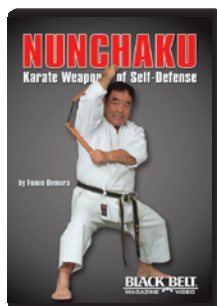
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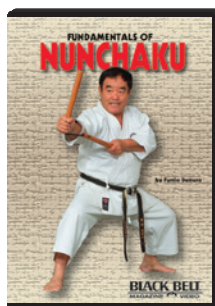
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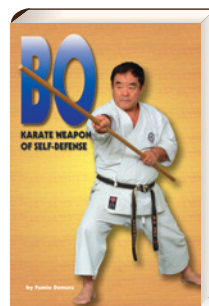
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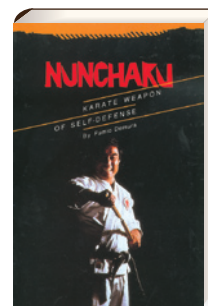
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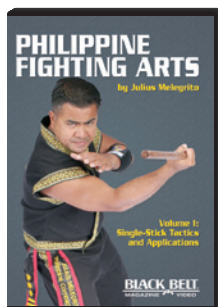
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