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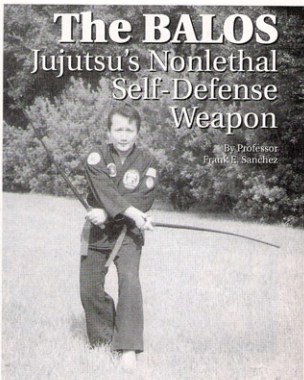
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It can be argued, and effectively so, that the first weapon to have been used by primitive man in protecting himself would have been the club. There are still those who theorize that an even smaller version of the club existed which pre-dated it. This weapon was a more natural part of the environment and needed little shaping as in the case of the club. It was also an instrument of pain rather than destruction and was easier to carry. This meant that it could be wielded by the weakest individual with effective results if applied correctly. In ancient Africa, this particular weapon was once used to prod domesticated wildlife and still is today in some parts of the country. It's effectiveness as a weapon evolved in the same manner farm implements in Okinawa developed... through sheer accessibility if attacked.

Necessity Breeds Inventiveness

As time progressed, this seemingly innocent and crude instrument of herding developed into a weapon of defense as the African farmer had to defend himself from bandits and alterations that erupted during the course of the day.

The length and width of the instrument combined with its flexibility made for a ready made weapon which could be hidden just about anywhere and which could be easily carried on one's person.

With all this going for it, why is it that this particular weapon never really caught on in the Western World? The main reason is that it does not really carry any deadly force. While most weapons of the stick variety are used as bludgeoning instruments to either break the opponent's bones or worse yet, to crush the opponent's skull. This particular stick weapon does not. It relies instead on inflicting intense pain by its whip like motion to cause the opponent

to retreat from the onslaught or risk losing consciousness as the body's pain threshold is reached.

Called the "Balos" in the Guamanian art of San-jitsu which adapted it for use from the original African prototype. It is a narrow flexible stick which in modern times is molded of plastic and tapers at its end so that the part which inflicts the most damage is the very tip. Since it is extremely pliable, the wielder of this particular weapon can even extract himself from precarious positions where the weapon is grabbed by allowing the weapon to twist and bend so that the user can maneuver himself into a position where an effective counter attack can be made.

The fact that the popularity of the weapon grew more predominately in Africa than it did anywhere else or that the Guamanian art of San-jitsu chose to adopt and refine it as a fighting art, does not mean that other countries did not have similar type weapons. In fact, if you look hard enough, you will find facsimile types in most of the rural



Professor Sanchez demonstrates the flexibility of the balos. As it is blocked by an escrima stick, the balos flexes around the stick to strike the opponent.

countries where advanced weaponry is either too difficult or too expensive to obtain. The intent of these facsimile types however (except in rare instances) was to torture or punish and not defend oneself.

Since the Balos has no real lethal potential other than to inflict pain as we mentioned before, it is the perfect weapon of choice for those interested in combating violence by non-lethal means.

Striking Techniques

To strike with the weapon, the Balos is flexed back either across the shoulder with the opposite hand maintaining tension on the upper length of the rod across the chest and under the armpit or it is held cross body with the free hand maintaining pressure. As the weapon is released, the weapon is flexed against the hand maintaining tension so that it increases the intensity of the whipping action. This results in a more penetrating strike as the weapon



In the overhead flex position, note the whip-like characteristics of the weapon.

is aimed at exposed areas of the body or to the lesser protected areas of the anatomy.

To increase the intensity of the strike, the weapon can also be doubled up in the two hands as one would grab a baseball bat and swung in this fashion. The double weapon strike increases the weight and intensity of the strike where it penetrates more and adds more destructiveness.

In using it as a single weapon, it can be twirled in figure 8 fashion so that the weapon strikes upon initial impact and then comes back from another angle to strike. When doing this particular movement it is important to keep the centerline of the body protected by using mostly wrist movement to make the strike without too much shoulder or arm motion. In this manner, the arms and hands still remain central to the body

The balos is probably the most humane weapon one could use in a physical confrontation.

protecting the ever vulnerable centerline. The practitioner must also be aware that this pattern is one designed to set up a shield of sorts to protect the body only while the weapon hand is in motion. Once the weapon hand rests the body becomes vulnerable again. So, it is important to assume one of the defense positions as described earlier when the pattern is completed.

The second type of single strike is performed in a diagonal pattern. As the strike is delivered across the body at face height, the body shifts to add momentum to the blow. Upon completion of the swing, the weapon is re-directed in backhand fashion so that it slashes across the body at a 45 degree angle downward to attack the opponent's legs. As this is being done the other hand remains in an open hand position in front of the body to re-direct or block any incoming attack to the body's centerline.

In as much as the weapon can be used to strike with, it can also be used



Sanchez prepares to deliver a double inward cross strike (1). He avoids a head strike while striking the attacker's knees (2). Sanchez rechanges the balos for an outward cross strike (3). He completes an outward double strike against the opponent's temple (4).



To increase the weight and intensity of a strike, the weapon can be used in pairs. Here the weapon is doubled up in two hands and swung like a baseball bat.

as a distraction when thrust at the adversary's eyes. Since the tip is flexible there is not much damage that can be done unless there is a direct hit. However, the idea of being poked in the eyes usually draws the opponent's hands upward exposing the opponent's abdomen and lower body to attack.

When using two of them at the same time, the weapons can also be jiggled at a distance to intimidate in much the same manner a crab or scorpion would jiggle its claws to intimidate its prey. This psychological ploy can do much to dissuade an opponent from fighting or at the very least, cause him to re-think his plans regarding attacking with any aggressiveness. The defender should also distance himself a bit from the attacker when using this ploy or risk the danger of having the Balos grabbed out of his hands.

Once the defender is within striking range, he can revert to a double figure 8 pattern to strike the opponent with multiple blows. This is done in much the

same manner as the single figure 8 pattern, only the strikes are alternated between left and right hands so that the body is continually protected as the arms exchange going above and under the shoulders in a fluid motion. The weapons form a protective barrier against penetration in this way.

Another manner of striking is to bring the weapons across and inward in an "X" pattern so that the target is struck from both sides. The target in this instance can be the head, legs, etc. once the weapons penetrate they are re-crossed and the weapons flung backward to penetrate the target once again from another direction. The advantage of this particular strike is the shock value connected with it when the weapons hit simultaneously. The weakness of this particular technique is in the end Positioning once the strike is completed since the body is open to attack.

Lastly, the butt of the weapon can be used in much the same way the hilt of a sword or yawara stick would be used. It can be smashed in various ways into

the opponent's face and body or ground into the opponent's extremities to generate pain or cause a knock out.

Conclusion

Though the Balos is limited by its inability to deal a death blow. Under normal circumstances, it does offer the perfect solution for the martial artist who wishes to address the legal implications of self-defense and disable the opponent without permanent harm. In this way, it is probably the most humane weapon one could ever hope to use in a physical confrontation... From Africa to Guam, where it was refined... It is a product of the old culture which has been finally brought to light in today's modern age where the welfare of the defender is just as important as the welfare of the attacker.

Professor Frank E. Sanchez is the founder of Guam's first Internationally known art of San-jitsu. He is also Executive Director for the WORLD HEAD OF FAMILY SOKESHIP COUNCIL and AMERICAN MARTIAL ARTS ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida.

The weapon also lends itself to butt strikes, to the solar plexus (left) and to the testicles (below).



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