Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) Glossary

(All terms in Tagalog, unless indicated otherwise)

Abanico - lit. “fan,” lateral (side to side) motions performed with a straightened arm as a blocking maneuver.

Arnis - lit. “harness,” terms used in the Northern Philippines for FMA, synonymous with the middle-Philippines term, “escrima,” or the southern term, “kali.”

Atias - “backwards,” the term used for retreating.

Baba Taaas - “up” & “down,” denoting vertical slashes or strikes delivered along the center-line of an opponent.

Banda y Banda - side to side slashes or strikes.

Baston - stick or baton used in FMA

Bolo - a type of machete (usually with a leaf shaped blade) used throughout the Philippines.

Cardena - lit. “chaining,” linking one technique with another in rapid succession.

Corto - close range

Crossada - “crossing”; maneuver used to block an incoming attack by forming an X-pattern with one’s baton, arms, or bladed weapon.

Daga - knife or dagger

Doble - “double;” two strikes delivered in rapid succession.

Dulo - Dulo - palm stick (dulo), spoken twice to indicate style of fighting with said weapon.

Dumog - “grappling,” either in a clinch or on the ground.

Escrima - (alt. eskrima) - synonymous with arnis (above).

Espada y Daga - sword (espada) and dagger (daga) used together. Sometimes also connotes the use of baton and knife in tandem.
Guntig - “scissors,” a technique also referred to as “de-fanging the snake,” which means wounding an opponent’s limb through a slapping motion as one attempts to block an incoming strike.

Hubud - “untie or undress,” when coupled with lubud (blend), a term that connotes a form of “flow” drill (see below).

Hubud-Lubud = “to tie and untie,” to engage and disengage, continuously as a drill in hand-to-hand combat.

Itak - a long sword or bolo


Lakan - a belt-rank in Modern Arnis equivalent to black belt” or instructor (guro).

Langka - “footwork”

Largo - long distance

Likas - lower ranks (below black belt) in Modern Arnis

Mano y Mano - “hand to hand” combat

Medio - “medium” range fighting

Pakal - “ice pick” grip used in knife fighting

Palis - Palis - From palis (“sweeping,”) form of parrying and striking delivered with the elbow bent at a 45 degree angle.

Punyo - “pommel” of a sword, knife, or baton.

Redondo - a circular power-strike.

Redonda - continuous drill employing two batons continuously.

Rompida - and upward and downward slash or strike delivered in an x pattern.

Salamat - a greeting derived from the Muslim “salaam” (or peace) and connoting gratitude.
Sero- Sero - “zero- zero” circular strikes delivered one after another in a wide-ranging, circular fashion while advancing on an opponent.

Serrada - close quarters combat executed at corto (close) range. Also a style of escrima, popularized in the U.S. by Angel Cabales.

Sikaran - genereally “sticking with the legs.”

Sinawali - lit. “to weave,” connoting the continuous weaving motion that one uses with two batons, knives, or hands to couple simultaneous strikes and blocks. Also, like redonda or hubud- lubud, a drill pattern.

Sunkite - an upward jabbing thrust, sometimes followed by a lateral cut.

Sumbrada - an upward, oblique “umbrella” block.

Tapi- Tapi - a series of checking and counter-checking using parrying blocks and strikes; a general term for flow drills used in Modern Arnis used by Grandmaster Remy Presas Sr.

Visidario - a term meaning “transformative flow;” a continuous, graceful flowing from one technique to another, emphasized in Modern Arnis