

Krabi Krabong

The Art of Thai Sword Fighting

David Rawlings took time to talk to Guro Dan Inosanto about the art of *Krabi Krabong* and his involvement in this little known art. This interview was conducted 7/10/99 during St. Louis, MO 'Summer Camp 99'.

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Dave Rawlings: Who was your first Instructor in Krabi Krabong?

Dan Inosanto: My first Instructor was a student at my Academy and his name was **Niyom Piboolnaria** back in about 1975, he was studying *Jun Fan Gung Fu*, kick-boxing methods and *Kali* but he was already trained in *Muay Thai* and *Krabi Krabong*.

DR: How long have you studied Krabi Krabong?

DI: I studied off and on from him from about 1975 to '80 but I met Ajarn Chai around 1978 or '79.

DR: If you had to try to explain to someone who had a Kali background but had never seen Krabi Krabong, what are the similarities and the differences between these arts?

DI: *Krabi Krabong* uses all the same angles as *Kali* but the differences are in that the metal sword and the weapons handle are somewhat longer and the power, and you have to account for that. **Niyom** taught me on sword first and you have to allow for the longer handle, and if you go to the centerline the handle would go into your own gut, as where in *Kali* you may or may not have a handle at all.

The coordination exercises are very similar at least in the double stick or sword when adjusted for the longer handle. Tactically, when I say more powerful is that it stays on 'hard power' and speed throughout and they are running at you full blast, as where *Kali* might have varying degrees of power and speed. For me, I don't really look at which one would be better or not to train, but that I have never regretted any of my training in *Krabi Krabong*. I love it.

DR: What are some of the weapons in Krabi Krabong?

DI: There is the single *Krabi* or *Daob* (sword), double *Daob*, *Daob* and shield; usually called the *Mai Sow*, it looks like a tonfa but it is usually tied on to the arm. *Ngaw* that looks like a halberd. *Tuan* which is the spear, and then you have the *Krabong* which is the staff. Then there are also several styles of shields called *Dung*, *Kaen*, and *Loh*. To be specific about the kicking, although they kick in both arts, kicking in *Krabi Krabong* happens more during the blade work.

DR: Are the different rankings in Krabi Krabong?

DI: Yes, they have an Instructor level ranking structure categorized, 1-through-10.

DR: Ajarn Chai has affected everyone he teaches, how has he affected you as a teacher/martial artist/ and as a person?

DI: Well first as a teacher, he has helped me cut to the chase in all my arts, that has made the arts functional for me. He's a Master teacher, I have learned by how he breaks down material. There are few Master teachers, and he's definitely one.

As a martial artist, he has taught me to analyze a lot. That is how he makes all of those combinations, he's watched a lot of fights and analyzed a lot of taped fights, and he knows how to set up the training methods. He has made me change the way I thought about all of my martial arts. Even when I do *Silat*, I obviously have a *Panatukan* (Filipino Boxing) base but it has changed over to a strong *Muay Thai* base with all the Thai boxing combinations.

As a person, he has taught me to feel my body (in painful ways), to appreciate nature, to think or analyze more and to be independent of others. In my lifetime there are very few people I would give my life for, besides my family and very close friends, and he is somebody that I would literally give my life for, because I have that much respect for him, and there are very few people that I would do that for.

He has been a real inspiration for me; he's right up there like **Dr. Gyi** (*Burmese Bando Instructor*) to me, and even though he is younger, I'm older than him by maybe 10, 12 years, most people think you look up to your elders, but he is an inspiration to me.

DR: When did you formerly start your training in Krabi Krabong and who was your first Official Instructor?

DI: My first Instructors in Thailand were **Ajarn Samai Mashamana** and his sons **Ajarn Pramote Mashamana** and his younger brother, **Ajarn Tunosak Mashamana**.

Also **Lt. Col. Nattapong Buayam** who was the Krabi Krabong Champion of Thailand and the former teacher of Krabi Krabong at the Thai West Point Academy as well as the Minister to the King & Queen of Thailand.

DR: How many times have you been to and trained in Thailand?

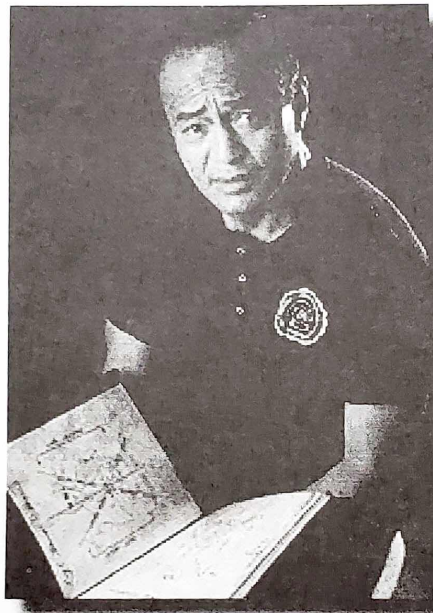
DI: Back in July and December 1998 was the third and fourth time at the **Buddhai Sawan School**. **Ajarn Chai** brought in **Col. Nattapong** the last two times as well as training with **Ajarn Pramote** and **Ajarn Tunosak**.

DR: Where do you think that Krabi Krabong will go from here?

DI: I feel that because there will be a world competition this year the art will grow and become even more popular.

DR: What would you like to see happen in the future for the Thai Boxing Association?

DI: I would like to see **Ajarn Chai** and the **T.B.A.** continue to grow. I don't think most people see the sacrifices that he has made to promote the arts of *Thailand*. I think it will get stronger and it has the highest standards of all the Muay Thai organizations out there. And a last word to all of Ajarn Chai's instructors, remember to keep training and remain loyal, you have a great organization.



Kru Daniel Inosanto