

Far Eastern Martial Arts in the Perspective of Culture Sciences

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Abstract

Popular all over the world Asian martial arts undergo scientific interpretations in many countries. The authors of the study present original output of Polish scientists who formulate a systematic humanist theory from the perspective of sciences on man, culture and society. On this occasion they reach for works of scientists from Poland and other countries, for already acknowledged theories and methodology of research.

Theoretical, philosophical and socio-cultural analysis of the phenomenon of martial arts has been developed here since the 1970s. Present humanist dimensions of the ways of martial arts are studied and explained in many aspects by Wojciech J. Cynarski along with a group of international scientists gathered around "Scientific Year's Issue Ido – Movement for Culture" in Rzeszow.

Key words: culture sciences, martial arts, anthropology, "Movement for Culture"

Introduction

Far eastern martial arts are not only a specific, quite exotic element of physical culture but also a significant part of global culture and socio-cultural phenomenon of world movement compared to the Olympic movement. Martial arts and originating from them combat sports have become common on a global scale. They have also gained great popularity in Central Europe [Cynarski et al. 2002; Duricek, Leitmann 2004]. The authors discuss the problem of culturological approach and interpretation of this phenomenon in Polish literature. Polish scientists create an original theoretical concept in this field.

Culture sciences – various paradigms

Researchers in Poland reach for scientific projects of acknowledged theoreticians developing their concepts of creating new syntheses and independent theories. The exemplification of this tendency is Eliade's theory of intercultural dialogues developed by Tokarski [1976] and Cynarski [2000]. Eliade [1970] left the output of his Chicago School including, among others, the terminology and the concept of new anthropology which covers the spheres of sacrum and spirituality. Tokarski as an orientalist and a philosopher and at the same time a practitioner of martial arts was the first Pole describing Asian martial arts in cultural perspective. In his book he defined martial arts as "motion forms of expression of eastern philosophy" explaining them as ways of self-defense, self-expression and self-perfection [Tokarski 1989].

Traditionally cultural anthropology accepts explanatory function towards extra-European cultures. For a hundred years the principle of caring for the description of a given socio-cultural system from the perspective of the members of this system – their beliefs, knowledge, the world of values [compare: Bock 1984; Nugent, Shore 1997] is valid. Certain works of martial arts researchers [Maliszewski 1996; Tokarski 2000; Jones 2002; Green, Svinth 2003] belong to this current.

On the borderline of cultural anthropology and sociology of culture we find analyses of contemporary adaptations of far eastern martial arts, their present-day institutionalization and globalization. The current started by Tokarski [1989], Donohue [1994] and Japanese scientists is continued especially in the works of Cynarski and Obodynski. We find here the analysis of martial arts in the process of globalization [Cynarski 2003; 2006; Obodynski, Cynarski 2003 a]. The thread on the presence of martial arts in mass culture thanks to the popularity of films with such themes [compare: Tokarski 1989; Cynarski 2000; Cynarski, Berdel 2003; Cynarski, Obodynski 2004 a] is also developed.

Tokarski showed philosophy of martial arts in the countries of their birth but other scientist try to formulate their contemporary philosophy – present-day budo as it is for millions of people practicing them all over the world. Such attempts were made by Olszewski [1995] – from the perspective of Christian theology of spirituality, Cynarski, Obodynski and Litwiniuk [Cynarski 2004 b; Obodynski, Cynarski 2004 b; Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2005] – describing ontology, axiology and epistemology of the ways of martial arts and comparing the ethics of those with the assumptions of Catholic personalism.

In the perspective of the theory of physical culture the definition of 'physical culture' by Jerzy Kosiewicz deserves special attention, "according to which physical culture may be included into symbolic-cultural types of social practice. Within it directive beliefs (aspirations and goals) and views function. Kosiewicz indicates development of versatile mature personality as the aim of physical culture where care for physical development

is accompanied by caring for spiritual values. He also mentions the cultural output of mankind in ideal, social and material sphere which co-creates ‘the possession’ of physical culture” [Kosiewicz 2004, pp. 66-71; Cynarski 2005 b].

Humanist theory – Cynarski’s systematic approach

Semiotics and symbolism of Japanese budo constitute an important part of culturological reflection in this field. The way of martial arts marked with consecutive degrees and titles has symbolic meaning which refers to psychophysical progress – from an adept to a master [Cynarski, Duricek 2001; Cynarski 2004 b]. The issues of ethos, ethics and axiology of the ways of martial arts are explained in the context of a range of cultural conditions.

The spiritual and physical, technical-tactical and moral dimensions of teaching martial arts require theoretical wholesome approach, as complete as it is possible. Thus, it is a necessity to accept systematic perspective as it is done by Cynarski [2000; 2004 b, Cieszkowski, Bujak 2000; Sterkowicz 2001]. The systematic paradigm allows for multidisciplinary studies of multiaspect and multidimensional phenomenon of martial arts.

The starting point is constituted by reflections concerning man, culture and society referring to, among others, the output of an extraordinary present-day humanist Erich Fromm [Fromm 1989; 1998; Cynarski 2001]. The very thought of creating new anthropology being the basis for other theories was borrowed from Fromm as well as detailed solutions concerning aggression, human needs, ethical evaluation. In turn C.G. Jung’s theory of archetypes was used [Cynarski 2004 a], the theory of dialogue [Cynarski 2003] comes from M. Buber and M. Eliade, and the program of studying the ways of using body [Cynarski 2004 b; compare: Kim Min-Ho 1999] – from M. Mauss. The evolution of the techniques of old Japanese aikijutsu [Cynarski 1993; 1997] and other ways of military use of the body is an important element of ‘the humanist theory of martial arts’. However, to a greater degree Cynarski attempts to explain the issues from the area of spiritual culture and psychophysical practices connected with the systems of martial arts reaching for cultural and psychophysical studies of coming from ‘Chicago School’ Maliszewski [1996].

Developed by Cynarski theory its theoretical and methodological grounds takes from the humanist theory of culture and philosophy of physical culture – from the output of F. Znaniecki, Z. Krawczyk, J. Kosiewicz, A. Szyszko-Bohusz [Obodynski 2003; Obodynski, Cynarski 2004 c; Cynarski 2005 b]. Apart from anthropological foundations we find here numerous references to sociology of culture, sociology of space [Cynarski 2005 a], sociology of sport [Cynarski, Obodynski 2004 b] etc. The researcher from Rzeszow builds ‘sociology of martial arts’ as the next foundation of a general theory – with their philosophy and methodology. In sociological reflection he describes theoretical premises, the place of this subfield in the system of sciences, problematic range and existing research output [Cynarski, Obodynski 2003; Cynarski 2005 c] as well as he explains numerous particular problems. It concerns the processes of change and institutionalization of martial arts [Cynarski, Obodynski 2005], their perception, understanding and adaptation in different countries [Cynarski 2004 b, Cynarski, Sieber, Litwiniuk 2005], the appearance of a new ascetic pattern of physical culture [Cynarski 2000; Obodynski, Cynarski 2003 b] and a number of other issues.

The area of scientific investigation described by Cynarski is very wide and the research projects are very ambitious. Numerous achievements in this field are an effect of education in several subjects and erudition of the founder of the humanist theory of far eastern martial arts (the dissertation *Theory and Practice of Far Eastern Martial Arts in European Perspective* [Cynarski 2004 b, pp.1-417] is its best example), his practical knowledge of martial arts and combat sports (he has master’s degrees in eight martial arts) and effective cooperation with numerous specialists. Many of his works were written in cooperation with Artur Litwiniuk, Kazimierz Obodynski, Lothar Sieber and other scientists.

Cooperatives of “Movement for Culture”

“Scientific Year’s Issue Ido – Ruch dla Kultury / Movement for Culture” (IRK-MC) founded by Cynarski and Obodynski gathers numerous scientists from Poland and other countries. Ido – perpetual movement – is to serve developing ‘humanist theory of martial arts’ in particular. The patronage over the journal is held by Committee of Scientific Research operating with Idokan Association Poland (among others, Professors E. Jaskolski, K. Obodynski and W.J. Cynarski) and international Editorial Committee and Scientific Committee.

Among authors writing for IRK-MC there is Jan Ozdzinski, the founder of the original theory of recreation and the researcher on psychophysical traditions of the East. He writes about the esoteric dimension placing the ways of martial arts in the area of movement recreation with psychological dominant [Ozdzinski 1995; 2001; 2004]. Such an approach is related to Cynarski’s concept who defines martial arts and the ways of budo in categories of ascetics, self-realization, transgression and transcendence [Cynarski 2004 b; Cynarski,

Litwiniuk 2005]. However, in principle the above-mentioned scientists use different languages having different premises as starting points.

If Ozdzinski tries to use various psychophysical practices of the Orient in recreation, other researchers view them as useful for pedagogy. It applies to works of the next specialist on psychology and philosophy of the countries of the East – Andrzej Szyszko-Bohusz [Szyszko-Bohusz 2003], the founder of original theory of ‘holistic pedagogy’. Szyszko-Bohusz co-creates the ethical and pedagogical foundation of general theory of the ways of martial arts. In turn the output of German humanists is referred to by Jorg-Michael Wolters [2005; compare: Saldern von 1998; Tiwald 1995], the founder of ‘budo pedagogy’ by which education at the higher level has already been realized.

R. M. Kalina, the founder of ‘the theory of combat sports’ began his cooperation with IRK-MC. This theory comes from theoretical assumptions of praxeology and concerns rather the issue of combat and combat sports than the ways of martial arts. However, its explanatory value is high and the area of discussed problems is wide enough to partly cover the field of humanist theory of martial arts. It is also applicable in instructions for training soldiers, teaching self-defense and combat sports [Kalina 2000].

In IRK-MC articles and studies concerning the history of martial arts, organizational structures, figures of masters-experts, works on facts and events, in which significant socio-cultural processes and problems are displayed, are published. It concerns founders of present-day budo [Rzany, Cynarski 2001] and other people creating contemporary history of martial arts. The history of associations and federations, founding and development of new schools and styles [Sieber, Cynarski 2002; 2003] are described; source materials and little-known facts are analyzed and interpreted.

Numerous scientists discuss in detail particular subjects of relations between martial arts and combat sports on one hand, and physical culture, both symbolic and spiritual on the other. The spectrum of discourse includes here statements of such authorities in cultural studies as A. Borbely (Hungary), H. Eichberg (Denmark), S. R. Hooge (Germany), V. Lukievic (Belarus), R. J. Maroteaux (France), J. Lipiec, Z. Krawczyk and J. Kosiewicz (Poland). Moreover, in IRK-MC many valuable texts on the theory of sport, training, empirical research appear as well as book reviews and reports from events – both scientific ones and those from the world of martial arts.

Other issues, other authors

Another issue is ‘martial arts tourism’ developed by Obodynski and Cynarski on the ground of the same – as it is in case of the humanist theory of martial arts – systematic paradigm [Obodynski, Cynarski 2004 a; 2006]. Motivated by the will to study martial arts way has inner dimensions (anthropology of the way of spiritual progress of its kind) and time-space, tourist dimension. A student of budo undertakes journeys to the sources to training centers, to houses and schools of masters-teachers or to trainings, tournaments, shows [Cynarski, Obodynski, Litwiniuk 2004]. Tourism of this kind is of cognitive, educational and self-realizational character but it may also be accompanied by the aspect of escapist motivation (rebellion and escape from surrounding cultural reality) or – in case of instructors – professional need for rising qualifications or their commercial use [Obodynski, Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2005].

In the direction of the general theory of martial arts and ways also other researchers tend to go whose interests are further from the scientific program (according to terminology by I. Lakatos) of Wojciech J. Cynarski. It applies to mentioned above Kalina but also to another Polish specialist in the field of martial arts and combat sports – Stanislaw Sterkowicz. His empirical works are interesting contributions to scientific interpretation of the axiology of martial arts [Sterkowicz 2000] or interpersonal relations occurring within groups of practitioners [Sterkowicz 2003]. This scientist, advanced in karate, jujutsu and judo practice as well as in Korean martial art hapkido indicates numerous educational and utilitarian values of martial arts not being combat sports.

The description of development and analysis of popularity of far eastern martial arts in Europe [Cynarski et al. 2002; Duricek, Leitmann 2004] or in the USA [Donohue 1994; Cynarski, Sieber, Litwiniuk 2005] or also the analysis of the phenomenon of ‘martial arts film’ inscribe into the circle of studies on cultural influence of martial arts – on a global and local scale, in the perspective of sport culture, mass culture or also higher culture [Tokarski 1989; Cynarski 2000].

Outside the circle of scientists concentrated around IRK-MC remain S. Tokarski, who writes for ‘Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia’ (Department of Extra-European Countries of Polish Academy of Sciences), part of cooperatives of the new specialized journal “Archives of Budo” and other individuals cooperating with the Rzeszow center on irregular basis or even sporadically¹. However, a chance for the output of Polish scientists – theoreticians of martial arts - to appear globally are organized in Rzeszow international scientific conferences

¹ It concerns the following cooperating institutions: 1) Faculty of Physical Education, Rzeszow University, 2) Podkarpackie Scientific Association of Physical Culture, 3) Idokan Association Poland in Rzeszow

and cooperation with such journals as "International Journal of Eastern Sports & Physical Education" or American "Journal of Asian Martial Arts".

Conclusion

Began by Tokarski more than 30 years ago philosophical and socio-cultural analysis of the phenomenon of martial arts is continued by individual Polish scientists and their teams. The wandering of far eastern traditions, cultural dialogue and various humanist dimensions are studied in a multiaspect way by Cynarski and the group of scientists gathered around "Scientific Year's Issue Ido – Movement for Culture". Cynarski put forward a humanist systematic theory of martial arts developed on the example of Japanese budo. The team from Rzeszow and abroad develops this concept building more general theory of martial arts and ways.

The theoretical base here is the output of humanist sociology and Polish sociology of physical culture, integral anthropology and holistic pedagogy. Multidiscipline character and the effort of systematic research are worth to be appreciated and the results – both general-theoretical and detailed – are worth to be popularized, especially that they are little known outside Poland.

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