



Ideological conditioning of martial arts training

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Authors' Contribution: A – Study Design, B – Data Collection, C – Statistical Analysis, D – Manuscript Preparation, E – Funds Collection

Abstract

Background and Study Aim: The impact of ideas on teaching and training in martial arts has not been widely studied yet. *Novum* here is specially designed methodology – by expert's judgements, not directly. On the ground of General Theory of Fighting Arts, the question is: How do ideological (philosophical, religious) conditions affect the process of training in different martial arts? The scope of research was limited to contemporary Europe and selected martial arts organizations (1980-2015). *Method:* The first method used here is based on analysis of the content of the literature of the subject, or rather qualitative analysis of the discourse. Then the opinions and teaching of 5 highest rank masters of martial arts from France, Germany and Poland were taken into account (expert court method). It comes to this own, long-standing participant observation of the author. *Results:* There are 5 issues taken from the literature of the subject and 5 of their western applications, according to master-teachers' teaching. They represent the classic canon of martial arts. The attitude to martial arts traditions varies from preference towards faithfulness to innovation. Disciples of Asian masters are more often in favour of the original version of the curriculum. *Conclusions:* Most of the ideological content of today's Asian martial arts comes from the philosophy of Taoism. In many cases the symbols and rules derive rather from the cultural traditions of the country of origin of the martial arts, rather than directly from certain religious or philosophical systems. The attitude of widely perceived perfectionism is one of these universal values of martial arts, which is worth promoting regardless of world-view.

Keywords: martial arts, axiology, training, Taoist principles

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Received: 04.05.2017; Accepted: 10.01.2017; Published online: 31.01.2018

Cite this article as: Cynarski WJ. Ideological conditioning of martial arts training. Physical Activity Review 2018; 6: 14-21. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.16926/par.2018.06.03>

INTRODUCTION

Emergent East Asian martial arts have existed in the Western world and on a global scale particularly after martial arts films in 1970s and 1980s. This fact of global popularity raises questions about their philosophy, which directly or indirectly influences the way of practice in the training room. The answers are different, but some scholars are trying to point out the principles that are universal in most martial arts [1]. It is quite difficult when in *karate* we find different ideological underpinnings, often mutually contradictory.

There are martial arts created in Buddhist temples, such as "Long Fist" *Shaolin kung-fu* [2], Taoist (like battle "inner" styles - *nejia*), or Shintoistic (like *Tenshinshoden Katorishinto-ryu* sword school). Polish *Signum Polonicum* school is culturally associated with Christianity [3]. Elsewhere, these are still other ideological references, most often resulting from the preferences of the school's creator or principal leader.

If Buddhist monk Takuan Soho was pondering the fate of the fighter or his state of mind during the fight, it had to do with the ideological content of Buddhism [4]. Today's identification of martial arts with a given religion can only occur with the purpose of promoting religion with the help of this martial art. Martial arts are not essentially associated with any religious belief. At the very least, some ritual gestures that points the time and place of the historical origin of the martial arts are preserved.

The ancient Chinese strategy indicated the correctness that the storm broke the oaks and the reed only rocked. Hence the principle of softness, elasticity and decay, adopted in hand-to-hand combat, is formed by the name of *jujutsu* art - soft technique. Symbols of many martial arts schools refer to legends and imagine the spiritual path to the mastery. We find here a crane and a tiger, a dragon and a phoenix. These may be ancient ideas that have existed in the culture of warriors for several thousand years. In turn "*The circle of Tao / taijitu symbolizes China, South Korea, but also Jeet Kune Do and Idokan karate (there are no white and black fields, but vectors are shown, symbolizing successive changes); This is in particular the harmonization and balancing of opposing energies, and the elements of masculine and feminine*"[5].

In order to adapt *jujutsu* to the ideas of physical education, sport and Olympics, Jigoro Kano created *judo* - an educational system in which he rejected techniques dangerous for co-workers. Thus, a modern martial arts was created, preserving the pedagogical and prosocial principle of *jita kyoei*. Successively, sports *wushu* became a demonstration discipline, a collection of aesthetic forms. However, entering the way of sporting competition is not the only tendency or the engine of change. Morihei Ueshiba changed martial arts into the art of harmony of movement, finding in *aikido* religious purpose. However, not all today's *aikido* is cultivating Ueshiba's doctrine, and not every *judo* or *jujutsu* is a fighting sport / combat sport.

In the perspective of General Theory of Fighting Arts [6], the question is: How do ideological (philosophical, religious) conditioning affect the process of training in different martial arts? The scope of research was limited to contemporary Europe and selected martial arts organizations (years 1980-2015).

METHODOLOGY

The first method used here is based on the analysis of the content of the literature of the subject or rather qualitative analysis of the discourse [7]. The second is expert courts method (competent judges). The opinions of top martial artists (9-10 dan) from Europe - France, Germany and Poland - were taken into account. Practical (in teaching and coaching) the five Grand Masters: GM Lothar Sieber 10 dan *meijin jujutsu & karate & ido*, GM Roland J. Maroteaux 9 dan *hanshi aiki-jujutsu*, GM Alain Floquet 9 dan *hanshi aiki-jujutsu*, GM Stanisław Cynarski 9 dan *hanshi aiki-jujutsu*, GM Keith Kernspecht 10 to an *WingTsun kung-fu*, 8 dan *karate*.

This is a methodological *novum* - the method is not directly implemented. Although the author is familiar with the opinions of the masters expressed directly, their publications and teaching, i.e. the opinions supported by the work, are analysed. The author was or is in four cases their *uchi-deshi* (so

called "inner student"), in the fifth one – a direct student. So there is a long-standing participant observation of the author - since 1980.

RESULTS

General Arrangements

Taoist principles

Some Taoist principles, that is, from philosophical Taoism, and beyond axiology, appear to be universal and fairly common in martial arts. This is e.g. regularity, moderation, low intensity of effort, behavior in accordance with the nature of the Universe (natural laws), and softness and elasticity - like the *ju-no ri* principle in *jujutsu*. This is consistent with the wisdom of *Tao Te Ching* book. The principles of water, harmony, *yin-yang*, and *aiki* also result, in their ideological justifications, of Taoism [5,8].

Understanding the philosophy of Taoism helps in a conscious study of *taiji quan* or *qigong* [9], in particular in relation to health. But it may also be helpful in other forms of physical exercise, e.g. jogging. Taoism teaches the avoidance of the effort and all excesses. Thus, for example, one should run at a steady pace and not for long distances. It is better to exercise regularly for a long time, using loads which are not too strenuous for the body [10]. This translates into *Tao* of training - do not force [11] and the rule of moderation e.g. in the version of *Shorinji kenpo* by master Doshin So (1911-1980) [12].

Indeed, the best for health, because the most natural form of movement is a walk or possibly light trunk. So the racing, especially the marathons, etc., are rather bad for health. Their justification is rather ideological and is due to the fashion style of sport, youth and vitality. Is it a form of pagan belief in the ability to prolong life? [13].

The search for Taoist monks on the elixir of immortality was much more rational. This elixir turned out to be a set of *qigong* exercises, actually affecting health [14]. The *qigong* (*chi kung*) breathing and energizing exercises utilize gymnastic and martial movements. They are a component of some melee systems, i.e., styles, schools and organizations.

Internal styles (*aikido*, *taiji quan*) imitate the Taoist principles. They seek balance and harmony. Their specificity lies in using the language of energy to describe the spiritual sphere. Hence, the development or expansion of *qi / chi* or *ki*, etc. Similar exercises can be used to fight or to heal. Taoist medicine mainly involves regulating energy flow, for example with needles (energy channel hypothesis) [14].

Extreme of Truth - *Kyokushin*

Oyama recommended sports competition in the formula he proposed – an organized the competition. From his point of view, the "Karate Way" was both Budo and the Zen practice. This was an expression of opposition to sport *non-contact karate*, which is similar to sport fencing. Oyama's idea was to show the truth about training and fighting.

Kyokushin karate is the opposition of philosophical Taoism. This is a feat to a certain degree. Tough, fighting contacts and breaking tests [15]. This counts the real power and ability to defeat the opponent, but also overcome their own weakness - pain, fear, etc. Masutatsu Oyama, the creator of this school and style, cited the social ethics of Confucius, some Taoist thinkers, and Zen Buddhist. But, is it the path of struggle, the pain of someone and myself, the proper Way of the Heavens [15]?

There is another possible understanding of this pursuit of extreme. It is not the absurdity of the extreme, like the extreme sports, but the pursuit of Truth [16]. Then the paths of many sages and philosophers, as well as the clergy and the people of science, are met with martial arts masters.

No Way – *Jeet Kune Do* by Bruce Lee

It is a kind of revolution against ancient martial arts systems and traditional teaching methods [17,18]. Classic systems were based on the teaching of numerous technical forms. Bruce Lee rejected this, and also modified the repertoire of techniques. He denied techniques not useful in real combat, and borrowed numerous others - including western boxing and fencing. He put on ingenuity,

innovation, claiming that there are no limits - you can and should be experimenting. He experimented with exercise equipment, safety equipment (protective pads), training methods. He opened the way for new combat sports and eclectic systems.

In the ideological sphere, Lee, in particular, was based on Taoism and Zen Buddhism. He believed that life is a struggle, and the pursuit of freedom also applies to the struggle. He wrote about the way to Truth [17] and sought the truth about the fight. He thought that we should reject the limiting forms and that was necessary to simplify what was too complicated. The principle of water, which is adaptation to the situation (as the shape of the vessel) results from the philosophy of Taoism.

The way to improve character (Budo, Karate-do, etc.)

Sensei Gichin Funakoshi and other masters have emphasized ascetics for the exercise of character /personality. Improving character is one of the main Budo goals [19,20]. Funakoshi was a Confucianist. For the rest of his life he opposed the *karate* sport competition.

The humanistic pathway under the name *Zendo karate Tai-te-tao* by Peter Jahnke and the philosophy of *Ido* develop this precisely axiological and pedagogical ideological trend [21]. This is a fairly universal idea that draws on the knowledge and wisdom of both the East and the West.

Peter Jahnke [22], in his religious explorations and as a teacher of *karate* school, appealed to Tao and Zen, also in school names and in technical designations [21]. Among the universal principles he pointed out the "Law of Great Love," because God is love. In a sense, he identified Tao with God [23].

Performance formula/pattern

It's always been about the effectiveness of a warrior or soldier in combat, in war. Art of war is especially the art of effective killing. Magic or religion was supposed to help the soldier in accepting death - someone's or his own. Achieving an inner state of emptiness was useful for emotional calmness and undisturbed emotion.

Utility for military and uniformed services requires a pragmatic approach rather than a normative ethics. It is similar issue in martial arts organizations that wish to be effective in self-defence and real combat. Defeating attacker requires a high-performance and technical and tactical skills. The idea of long-term self-improvement and broadly perceptive perfectionism is helpful. But in the training of the army and uniformed services, the time for this process is very limited.

In a few years or even months it is possible to teach a man how to fight using dangerous techniques. However, the process of upbringing takes longer. Therefore, in the martial arts, which are educational systems, the pursuit of the mastery has been extended for at least 10 years [24].

APPLICATIONS

Stanisław Cynarski and his teaching

Sensei S. Cynarski has been practicing *judo*, dealing with various martial arts, and finally obtained the high master degree of *aiki-jujutsu*. He teaches his *soto-deshi* ("outside pupils") regularly at the *dojo* in regular practice groups. On the other hand, *uchi-deshi* ("inner student") used non-standard, special training.

For example, the monkey training. It is climbing the branches of trees. It strengthens the grip (strengthens the hand), develops spatial orientation, sense of balance, and courage. This is a useful exercise for *judo* and *jujutsu*, where many techniques are performed after successive grasp of opponent.

The martial arts tradition is highly respected by the *sensei*, as evidenced by his praise and attentiveness of master Yoshio Sugino (10 dan *kobudo, hanshi*) [25]. In addition, he uses physical exercise and bio-energy massage *aiki-taiso* derived from *aikijutsu*, which is close to medical knowledge and Taoist philosophy.

But, as a former *judoka*, Pole and European, he is open to sporting competition (not opposed to student participation), modern strength and conditioning training. S. Cynarski applied running training at the top of St. Martin for many years. In addition, his disciples competed in sports *jujutsu*. This approach is quite flexible. But this flexibility can also be explained by the Taoist principles.

Alain Floquet

The principle of transferring knowledge ‘from the heart to the heart’ (Jap. *ishin-den shin*) is in the advanced instruction of *aikibudo* at the school of *sensei* Floquet. This is perhaps the echo of Buddhist tradition, cultivated in the schools of classical martial arts.

Floquet started with the new *budo* - *judo*, *karate* and *kendo* to reach *kobudo*. He brought to Europe teaching of the classical schools of *Tenshinshoden Katorishinto-ryu*, and *Daito-ryu*, but his system was based mainly on the modified *aiki-jujutsu* technique *Yoseikan*. As in any *aikido*, there are concepts of centre, spherical movement, *ki* and *aiki*. Distance, body rotation and energy balls, which is somewhat similar to the *neijia kung-fu* (*taiji quan*, and *bagua zhang*). It has little in common with the ideology of the late Morihei Ueshiba (Shinto sect of Omoto Kyo), except for a common source - *aikijutsu*. However, similarly as by Ueshiba, *budo* is – for Floquet [26] – “the pathway of harmony and peace”.

Exercises with traditional weapons are a complement to manual techniques, or vice versa. In melee combat, the method of sparring - *randori* (also in the form of a few on one), not just the form (*kata*). There are also practical exercises for self-defence in manual and *tonfa* techniques, as a tool commonly used by the police. In contrast, sports competition is not recognized here.

Keith Kernspecht

In the youth, he was fascinated by Bruce Lee and inspired by his revolutionary martial arts idea, and has come to know various styles of Japanese, Filipino and Chinese styles. He became famous especially as a *WingTsun kung-fu* teacher (from that style B. Lee started, as this style was a basis for conceptualizing *Tao of Jeet Kune Do*).

Kernspecht completed over time the primordial tendency to be effective in the self-defence of the Taoist ideological underpinnings. This is traditional knowledge and "spirituality" in the language of energy (*qi / chi*), health and energy (*chi-kung / qigong*) exercises. In this way, he created the "inner" *WingTsun kung-fu*. He completed in his school the standard imposed by the old system, with a set of new techniques - responses to any attack.

His organization teaches parallel fencing (*escrima*) and grappling. It is therefore an innovation of inherited tradition to adapt to the training / teaching of real combat to current needs. Wooden dummies are used here, but the preferred form of exercise is to practice with a partner.

Sifu Kernspecht does not express explicit praise for any religious or philosophical system. He also does not impose any ethical principles [27]. But in his school, there are Confucian principles of family relations, commonly adopted in *kung-fu* schools.

Roland J. Maroteaux

This French *sensei* also practiced a few martial arts - *aikido*, *judo*, *karate*. He brought the teachings of the schools *Hakko-ryu* and *Takeda-ryu Nakamura-ha* to Europe. It always emphasizes the efficiency of technique, the aesthetics of movement and the *butoku* ethical principles [28]. In his view, the spirit of old *jujutsu* and Japanese *bushi* is as in to the knight ethos.

He teaches in his small private *dojo* and at numerous training seminars in many countries around the world. He combines melee combat with classic weapon techniques and martial arts with cultural studies. *Sensei* Maroteaux respects and promotes the Japanese tradition in a clear message, and rejects all sports competition.

Here too, *randori* is used on *yudansha* (black belts) level. So we need to react accordingly to the changing situation. And in teaching the *Takeda-ryu Maroto-ha* school, there are several complementary disciplines: *aiki-jujutsu* and *ju-kenpo* (manual techniques), *shugijutsu* (short stick), *jodo* (medium stick), *iaido* and *battojutsu* (Japanese sabre). This concept is complementary and each discipline is complemented each other, which is fulfilling recommendation for sport practice in theory of training.

Lothar Sieber

By GM Sieber, the Taoist language and Zen occur in *kata* and in the name of *karate* style - *Zendo karate Tai-te-tao*. Sieber is the legal successor of Peter Jahnke's school. However, *meijin* recognizes the Decalogue as the main ethical signpost. At the same time he respects Buddhism and Taoism.

Especially interesting is the teaching principle of *ido* - continuous, fluid movement, akin to *aiki*. This applies to the techniques of *jujutsu*, *karate* and *iaido*. We have here some visible influences of Taoism [8]. If the *ido* is a development of Jigoro Kano's "judo" idea, the *Zendo karate Tai-te-tao* was developed as a protest against "karate sport". The Taoist concept of *yin-yang* (Japanese *in-yo*), the theory of five elements, and the principle of flexibility / adaptation / water are present in the tactical and technical field of this school.

In Sieber's teachings *jujutsu* and *karate* serve essentially for real self-defence and combat, not a duel within a sports convention. Special techniques have been taken mainly from *kenpo*. In addition, it is practiced on mannequins, small *makiwaras* (board covered with straw), heavy bags, etc. Impact strength, flexibility, and "cat's movements" are emphasized [29].

Because every *jujutsuka* must be able to fight in the distance, and every *karateka* can effectively use *jujutsu* self-defence, the students of this school can achieve real combat skills in various positions and distances. It is a very innovative school whose techniques are still being mastered by the Grand Master.

DISCUSSION

Krzysztof Kondratowicz (12 dan) created an ethical code of *jujutsu*, which refers to the ideal general idea of the Samurai tradition and the humanistic idea of humanity [30]. It was a rather designed/projected ethical canon, developed for pedagogical purposes. From the wisdom of East Asia, there are basically symbols, gestures, and rituals that determine behaviour at the place of exercise.

In more modern schools are also moving away from Chinese or Japanese terminology. Roland Habersetzer (9 dan) emphasizes mainly the utilitarian value of *karate*. So the technique is a self-defence tool. This does not exclude his attitude towards *budo* as a way of life, especially of personal self-improvement [30,31]. This is an approach similar to that preferred by L. Sieber.

Jan Slopecki (10 dan) is not ashamed and afraid to express his faithfulness towards the Christian religion and the Decalogue. He is a traditionalist in ethical terms, and a modernist in terms of techniques and teaching methods [32]. He is similar in this to L. Sieber.

Undoubtedly, the main change has occurred in terms of changes in the ideological assumptions and goals of training in the transition of numerous organizations from martial arts as a pathway, to combat sports and sports competition. As a result, the change of curricula and the reduction of educational systems come [33-35]. In the case of extreme commercialization, both the myth of effective technique, secret knowledge or magical power, or philosophical reasons are forms of decorative packaging for the products to be sold.

Just as it is in the world of martial arts, some martial arts leaders focus more on tradition (like R. Maroteaux), while others are innovative, although to a varying degree. Much depends on what teachers have mastered, especially Asian or European. Another determinant may be the fact of being attached to the cultural tradition of one's own country and the degree of internalisation of content provided by martial arts educational systems.

For a Japanese, the sense of *budo* can be religious and identity (a fragment of national heritage) [1,15]. For a Pole or a German, the same martial arts can be instrumental in serving different needs. The meaning of the notion of martial arts is very extensive. It concerns many phenomena at the plane of culture, psychology, science of physical culture and other fields [36]. For a Japanese, Pole, German and others various nationalities, the aim is to develop knowledge concerning pro-health effects of practising martial arts in the context of the quality of life [37,38].

CONCLUSIONS

There are 5 views taken from the literature of the subject and 5 of their Western applications, as indicated by masters of the highest rank from Europe. They either reject sport or tolerate it, what attests to the representation of the classical canon - teaching combat skills. The attitude to martial arts tradition is also different here - from the faithful to the far-reaching innovations. Asian masters

students (like Floquet, Maroteaux) are more often in favour of the original / source version of the curriculum.

The relationship to values and ethics is diverse. Most of the ideological content of today's Asian martial arts comes from the philosophy of Taoism. The very idea of the way (*dao/tao*) comes from here, and the principles of flexibility and energy balancing, too. In many cases the symbols and rules derive rather from the cultural traditions of the country of origin of the martial art, than directly from certain religious or philosophical systems. The attitude of widely perceived perfectionism is one of these universal values of martial arts, which is worth promoting regardless of worldview.

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