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[REV.] WOJCIECH J. CYNARSKI, *SOCIOLOGY OF FIGHTING ARTS*, WYDAWNICTWO UNIWERSYTETU RZESZOWSKIEGO, RZESZÓW 2023, PP. 120

How to cite [jak cytować]: Pawelec P., [rev.] Wojciech J. Cynarski, *Sociology of Fighting Arts*, *Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2023*, pp. 120, "Sport i Turystyka. Środkowoeuropejskie Czasopismo Naukowe" 2024, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 159–163.

The subject of this review is a book written by Wojciech J. Cynarski *Socjologia sztuk walki / Sociology of Fighting Arts*. The content value of the aforementioned study, the structure retained, and the Author's formulation and explanation of the issues taken up will be discussed.

Thus, this review will consist of a discussion and evaluation of the thematic structure of the book and its content. The whole will be supplemented by a brief description of the silhouette of W.J. Cynarski.

The author of the reviewed book (a representative of physical culture sciences and sociology) is a scientist who, among other things, studies issues related to martial arts, combat sports and similar forms of activity (not only within the framework of physical culture). He is the author of a number of books on various fighting arts,¹ about eight hundred scientific publications, as well as the editor (or co-editor) of thirty volumes of printed volumes – non-serial publications. The author of *Sociology...* works at the Institute of Physical Culture Sciences of the College of Medical Sciences of the University of Rzeszow in Poland. He is also the leader of the complete Idokan Yoshin-ryubudo and Shibu Kobudo martial arts system in this country. He has been president and technical director of the Idokan Poland Association (IPA) since 1993, and president of the Interna-

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¹ W.J. Cynarski, *Martial Arts and Combat Sports. Towards the General Theory of Fighting Arts*, Katedra, Gdańsk 2019.

tional Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society (IMACSSS) since 2010. He has been practising martial arts and combat sports since 1977.²

The reviewed book consists of an introduction and six chapters (summaries are included only in selected chapters). The whole is supplemented by an index of concepts and an index of names. On the other hand, there is no summary of the entire book.

In the first chapter, a theoretical introduction is made. The theory of martial arts from the perspective of sociology, the current state of knowledge, as well as inspirations referring to the work of Margaret S. Archer are considered (within the framework of subchapters). The content of this chapter is supplemented by the author's discussion and conclusions. However, in the introduction to this part of the study, W.J. Cynarski poses the question regarding the existence and possibility of functioning in the scientific space of the sociology of martial arts as a sociological sub-discipline. In doing so, he proposes a semiotic approach (taking into account the symbolic dimension of the level of physical culture, mass culture and symbolic culture) and a new paradigmatic approach (using at the same time a systemic, humanistic/anthropocentric and cultural approach).

The second chapter presents the phenomenon of combat sports. Wojciech J. Cynarski undertakes the task of discussing the subject of audience needs regarding the existence of spectacles and modern gladiators. Other topics include ludic forms of combat, the modern world of sports and the participation of combat sports in it, the functioning of women in combat sports, the issue of amateurs and professionals in the same forms of physical culture, as well as the pathologies of combat sports in the modern world. Meanwhile, in a small summary, the author claims that,

The main change is the sportisation of many martial arts, in the sense of introducing them to the tracks of sports competition. Athleticism is both one of the causes and a manifestation of the globalization of martial arts – their global spread.

The third chapter discusses the athleticization of martial arts. To this end, W. J. Cynarski included here six subsections (*Between Tradition and the Olympic Idea, Globalization of Judo, Taekwondo and Karate, Dilemmas of Traditionalists and Innovators and Adaptations Against Tradition, Relations Between Sensei and Students, Institutional Justification of the Differences Between Teacher and Trainer, and Discussion*). In this aspect, the author discusses, among other things, aspects accompanying globalization and institutionalization of fighting arts. On this occasion, he also presents the claim that athleticism as a sub-process of cultural globalization is closely linked to commercialization, and that it

² L. Sieber, P. Pawelec, *Professors of Martial Arts. Holders of This Title in Martial Arts Science*, "Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology" 2016, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 15–26.

itself has a negative impact on the cultural and national heritage expressed by martial arts. However, at the same time he acknowledges that commercialization enables, among other things, their popularization.

Symbolism in the Physical Culture, Selected Symbols from Some Asiatic and European Military Cultures, Fashion for Recreation with a Japanese Sabre, Tourism for Martial Arts Studies "at the Source", Raising Your Child Through Discipline (Educational Systems), Qi Energy and Health are the titles of the subsections of chapter four relating to the issues of attractiveness of martial arts of the classical kind. The author locates the analysis devoted to it, among other things, in the symbolic perspective ("[...] The code thus established co-creates the axionormative system of a given culture or subculture.") and criticises the attribution of spirituality to some elements characteristic of Japanese martial arts ("[...] Ki is sometimes associated with spirituality, which the author considers to be completely wrong.").

Chapter five takes up the subject of corporeality and spirituality in martial arts. Brief characteristics of various spiritualities, knowledge of truth and reception of the body are elements of the content referring to its sociological approach. As the author himself pointed out,

For centuries, religious systems have been establishing the norms of social functioning, providing a person with a sense of "axiological security". It is also important to build on those canons of morality and spirituality that have proven themselves over the centuries. Isn't getting to know the systems of psychophysical improvement, coming from foreign cultures, some kind of threat to "spiritual health"? For a person with a strong identity, probably not [...].

The sixth chapter contains the subject of ideological orientations and pro-social attitudes from the perspective of the Author's considerations regarding the analysis of attitudes taking on three components: knowledge, emotion and behaviour (with these foundations the heritage of martial arts could be spread more widely than before). He also briefly discusses the character types of young people (Narcissus, Jopek, Julka, Oskarek, Seba, Zaneta, Krystian), along with a brief characterization and assessment as to their potential or actual involvement in the process of adopting theoretical and practical knowledge of martial arts.

The analysis of the book described in the previous chapters will also follow its structure. In this aspect, issues will be addressed in accordance with the content of the study under discussion.

In the first chapter, which is a theoretical perspective, the author rightly locates sociological theory as a development of the scientific school of another Polish researcher, Zbigniew Krawczyk. He also positively refers to the theory of M.S. Archer, although, as he himself admits, the cited practical application of the theory of the said researcher was made only on the basis of selected threads. Wojciech J. Cynarski repeats the claim present in the literature that

martial arts transcended the realm of physical culture long ago and entered, among other things, mass culture. However, the author also poses an interesting question regarding the atavistic needs concerning violence that may characterize modern man. Also noteworthy is the depiction of four archetypes of women practising various fighting arts (warrior, princess, dancer and witch).

Wojciech J. Cynarski also presents the thesis on the athleticization of martial arts. Among other things, the author points out the crossroads between tradition and the Olympic idea. In addition, using Japanese martial arts as an example, the author presents the issue of teaching law and the relationship between sensei and students. It can be assumed that in light of the subject matter shown, another interesting study would be the analysis of the perception of specific sensei (in light of the master titles they hold) by their adepts.

According to W.J. Cynarski, the traditions of military cultures are transmitted through, among other things, single symbols and compound symbols. Leaving aside the debatability of treating symbols as heraldically simple and complex,³ the way of juxtaposing them and indicating their meanings (in terms of martial arts) in two perspectives: European and Asian can be considered innovative.

Once again, W.J. Cynarski points to the correctness of the existence of the sociology of martial arts as a scientific sub-discipline. Hence, the study of the so-called subject matter. "Way" of martial arts could also be viewed from an interdisciplinary perspective, and the influence of this subdiscipline could be more broadly related to many of its other counterparts (e.g. the sociology of morality, the sociology of sports and others).

Wojciech J. Cynarski also presents an approach emphasizing the functioning of social relations in the area of fighting arts based on truth and credibility of all parties involved (e.g. master vs. disciple). Also interesting is the paragraph on the Jita Kyoei principle (by Jigoro Kano) indicating the pro-social sense of practising martial arts for a long time.

The reviewed book is a study that brings knowledge of selected aspects of the sociology of martial arts in a condensed way. As stated by the author, "Essentially, however, this book is a continuation of my own research programs since 1994." It is also the first such a synthetic account and a significant step towards such a relatively independent sociological sub-discipline. The value of the publication is also enhanced by an extensive bibliography corresponding to each of the issues covered.

³ A. Znamierowski, P. Dudziński, *Wielka księga heraldyki*, Świat Książki, Warszawa 2008.

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