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## **IDO AS TREATMENT, HEALING OR SELF-HEALING. ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADITIONAL EAST ASIAN MARTIAL ARTS AND MEDICINE**

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### **Ido jako leczenie, uzdrowienie lub samoleczenie. O związkach tradycyjnych wschodnioazjatyckich sztuk walki z medycyną**

#### **Streszczenie**

*Ido* w znaczeniu „medycyny sztuk walki” (*bujutsu idō*) analizowane jest w wielu aspektach w perspektywie Ogólnej Teorii Sztuk Walki. Szczególnie interesujący jest odbiór społeczny tej i pokrewnych form medycyny naturalnej, co jest tutaj głównym tematem refleksji. Pojęcia „zdrowie” i „człowiek” są tu rozumiane całościowo. Odbiór społeczny analizowany jest tu pośrednio, poprzez obecność w opiniotwórczych tygodnikach i innych periodykach. Źródłem są wybrane czasopisma z lat 1982–2023 oraz bezpośrednie wywiady z trzema ekspertami. Zastosowano jeszcze dwie metody jakościowe – długoterminowa obserwacja uczestnicząca oraz analiza treści literatury przedmiotu. Scharakteryzowano zestaw metod leczenia lub samoleczenia oraz przedstawiono ogólny obraz medycyny alternatywnej w kulturze masowej na podstawie treści publikowanych w różnych czasopismach. Ostra krytyka miesza się tu z zainteresowaniem – poszukiwaniem niefarmakologicznych metod terapii. Różnicowany obraz medycyny alternatywnej (naturalnej, holistycznej) w kulturze masowej kształtują media. Tradycyjne sztuki walki nieczęsto łączy się z medycyną naturalną.

**Słowa kluczowe:** medycyna naturalna, odbiór społeczny, *bujutsu ido*, *Aiki-Jindo*.

#### **Abstract**

*Ido*, in the sense of “medicine of martial arts” (*bujutsu idō*), is analyzed from the perspective of the General Theory of Fighting Arts in many aspects. In particular, the social reception of this and

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related forms of natural medicine is interesting, which is the main topic of reflection here. The terms “health” and “human” are understood here holistically. Social reception is analyzed here indirectly, through the presence in opinion-forming weeklies and other periodicals. Selected magazines from the years 1982–2023 and direct interviews with three experts constitute the sources. There are also two more qualitative methods, i.e. long-term participant observation and analysis of the content of the literature on the subject. A set of healing or self-healing methods was characterized and a general picture of alternative medicine in mass culture was shown, based on the content published in various magazines. Sharp criticism is mixed here with interest reflected in the search for non-pharmacological methods of therapy. The diverse image of alternative medicine (natural, holistic) in mass culture is shaped by the media. It is rare to associate traditional martial arts with natural medicine.

**Keywords:** natural medicine, social reception, *bujutsu ido*, *Aiki-Jindo*.

## Introduction

Martial arts are associated with many areas of life (physical culture, safety, education), as indicated by the instructors of various types (Redzisz, 2004), but they are very rarely associated with medicine. Meanwhile, in the educational systems of some schools and organizations, there is “martial arts medicine” (*idō* or *bujutsu idō*). These are the issues of prevention, diagnostics, many different therapies, including rehabilitation – from healing and traditional medicine, through sports medicine, to various forms of alternative medicine. This issue is most often analyzed in the perspective of the General Theory of Fighting Arts in many aspects (Cynarski, 2019a: 317–331). In particular, the social reception of this and related forms of natural medicine (mainly of Chinese origin) is interesting, which is the main topic of reflection here.

Masters of martial arts of the highest rank, and these are usually people of advanced age, direct their interests towards issues of health and medicine. This is influenced by their age, health (as a result of many years of hard training) and interests, as well as the traditions of individual martial arts schools. This applies to historical master-teachers, as well as to today’s representatives of various traditionally oriented varieties of martial arts. Among the martial arts masters directly known to the author and cooperating with him at various times, there are or were (among others): Stanisław Cynarski 10 dan, Rudolf Gabert 9 dan, Tetsuhiro Hokama 10 dan, Keith Kernspecht 10 dan, Helmut Kogel 8 dan, Hisashi Nakamura 10 dan, Volodymyr Pilat (no dan given), Sergio Mor-Stabilini 9 dan, Lothar Sieber 10 dan, Yoshio Sugino 10 dan, so from *Takeda-ryū aikijutsu* to *Wing Tsun kung-fu*. The author also experienced the need for rehabilitation after a serious knee injury and other health problems, so the issues of pro-health activities became closer and more interesting to him than in the years of youth and high fitness. Some indications of *bujutsu idō* are practiced by the author himself, such as massage and *shiatsu*, dietary indications, breathing, relaxation [*Vide*: Annex. Relaxation exercise].



*Photo 1*

The author in the office of natural medicine Prof. Lothar Sieber, workshop in Weichs (Germany), February 2023 [from the author's collection – courtesy of L. Sieber]

The terms “health” and “human” are understood here holistically. The systemic theory of health according to F. Capra (Capra, 1987) and Weil's (1997) concept of self-healing are an inspiration here. On the other hand, we treat man as a person, as a psycho-physical being, with needs of a higher order, including spiritual ones.

The description covers the following topics:

1. Traditions, diagnosis and forms of therapy;
2. Learning centres and knowledge transfer;
3. The image of alternative medicine in mass culture;
4. Connections between natural medicine and martial arts tourism.

For this study, a set of four complementary qualitative methods was used. Social reception is analyzed here indirectly, through the presence in opinion-forming weeklies and other periodicals (analysis of the content of mass media). Selected magazines from the years 1982–2023, and two direct interviews (interview method) with *bujutsu idō* experts constitute the sources. There are also two other methods, i.e. long-term participant observation (over 40 years in the martial arts community) and analysis of the content of the literature on the subject (analytical method).

## Traditions

Perhaps the cradle of medical knowledge combined with practising martial arts is India. It is there that vital spots / points are studied to this day. They are used in therapeutic massage and are the target of attack in combat. They are

about life and death (cf. Kogel, 2006, 2008; Sieler, 2015: 95–177). Probably this knowledge was carried from India to neighbouring countries by Buddhist missionaries, merchants and warriors.

In the Chinese tradition, medicine is mixed with martial arts in the theory of vital points and energy circulation (acupuncture, acupressure, *moxa*), energizing exercises (*qigong*) and the pursuit of balance. *Taijiquan* and *qigong* are often practiced to improve health (Braksal, 1991: 121–122; Skrzeta *et al.*, 2021). There is also herbal medicine and other forms of natural medicine, which the Shaolin Monastery was famous for (Cynarski & Swider, 2017).

Similarly, in the Korean tradition, e.g. *in-sul* in *hwarangdo*, medical issues are part of the teaching system (Lind, 1996: 324, 697; cf. Wąsik & Wójcik, 2017). This ancient medical knowledge has travelled from China to Korea and Japan, where it is often taught along with martial arts methods and techniques.

Traditional medicine functions in many schools of old Japanese martial arts, e.g. *bujutsu/ kobudō*. In *Tenshinshōden Katorishintō-ryū* (continuity of tradition since the 15<sup>th</sup> century) it is called *te-ate*, in *Hakkō-ryū* school – *kohō shiatsu*, in *Takeda-ryū* – *bujutsu idō*. It was practised by a famous martial arts movie actor, Steven Seagal, but he is *mudansha* (no master degrees) in this regard. In addition, *jūjutsu* schools taught methods of *kappo / kuatsu* reanimation, which have survived in a reduced form, e.g. in *judo* (cf. Craig, 1995: 74–76; Punzet, 2001; Kuboyama, 2015).

*Takeda-ryū idō bujutsu* is practised by **Bernard A. Lalandre** (FR) – 9 dan, *hanshi*. Dr Roland J. Maroteaux (FR) holds 1 dan *h. c.* awarded by the IPA, but *bujutsu idō* is not currently taught at *Takeda-ryū Maroto-ha*, the school and organisation of the Maroteaux *shihan*. Here, health science specialists are licensed in *idō-jutsu*.

*Hakkō-ryū kohō shiatsu*, in the *Okuyama-ryū* version, created by **Terry Risier** (S. Okuyama, FR), is cultivated and propagated today, among others by Zenon Liszkiewicz and Piotr Jaskólski (PL). It is basically a kind of gymnastics and massage, which is supposed to improve the circulation of energy in the body (Cynarski, 2012).

*Tenshinshōden Katorishintō-ryū te-ate* contained psycho-magical healing methods and herbal medicine. *Shihan Yoshio Sugino* (1904–1998) ran a counselling and herbal pharmacy until the end of his activity.

*Bujutsu idō* in the *Idokan* system (Idokan Poland Association, IPA) is practised as a form of natural medicine by, among others, **Lothar Sieber** (10 dan, Germany) and **Romuald Włodyka** (8 dan, Poland). L. Sieber focuses on developing strength for self-healing of the patient's body. He also teaches sports medicine within the DDBV (up to and including 2022). R. Włodyka is a specialist in Chinese medicine. Both of these specialists try to treat sick people. In turn, **Wojciech J. Cynarski** (10 dan *ido / idō*) promotes the method of developing the positive potential of health, as it applies to healthy people who train martial arts

(Cynarski & Sieber, 2015). This positive potential is described by: the level of the body's efficiency, physical fitness, hardened state (to changes in temperature, pressure, humidity, etc.) and mental resistance (emotional self-control and effectiveness in a difficult situation).

Just like Japanese schools, the Chinese tradition cultivates care for health. **Chen Yong Fa**, PhD, Grand Master of the *Choy Lee Fut kung-fu* style, gives lectures on Chinese medicine and the use of "*Luchan qigong*" exercises (Kieta, 1999). In turn, one of the leaders of a *kung-fu* organisation in Poland recalls: "When I was a student, I first learned anatomy, studied acupuncture and *qi* circulation in the human body. The first teaching I received emphasized that medicine and good health are the true basis of all *kung-fu*" (Szymankiewicz, 1998: 12).

In further analysis, we will focus on the system cultivated within the *Yoshin* Academy and the IPA.

## Diagnosis and forms of therapy

*Iridology*, as a method of diagnosing from the retina, is used by both L. Sieber and R. Włodyka. It is a non-invasive form, preferred in alternative medicine [photo 1]. Symmetry disorders in the retina are interpreted as indications of pathological changes in the body that have already occurred or will appear soon.



*Photo 2*

Chinese medicine includes a map of energy circulation, which complements the knowledge of human anatomy [from the author's collection]

Also, both specialists use symptom assessment for homeopathic therapy in diagnosing, mainly on the basis of an *interview with the patient*. Holistic medicine here even enters the areas of psychology during a direct relationship with the patient and during interaction (conversation, facial expressions, gestures, assessment of the state of emotions). However, homeopathy, known for 200 years, is also changing, evolving. Therefore, a natural therapist must constantly improve their education (*cf.* Furmaniuk, 2023).

An interesting method is the diagnosis with the use of *electrical acupuncture* on the map of the auricle. Electrical impact on the receptor points is to help in determining the disturbance of the "energy flow" or in eliminating this disorder. The idea here is similar to that of acupuncture (a map of energy meridians) (Garnuszewski, 1988; photo 2).

### Bioenergy therapy

There were at least two healers whose achievements (effective therapeutic help) the author can confirm. These are namely, Prof. dr hab. **Wojciech Pasterniak** and the late **Mieczysław Kwolek** (and, to a lesser extent, his brother Tadeusz Kwolek). They were, in a way, "independent *shihan*", healing people. Both drew strength from God by praying to Jesus Christ or Our Lady. So, in their opinion, it was not a transfer of magical, cosmic energy. Moreover, spiritual help can be obtained only from a person remaining in a state of purity of heart. M. Kwolek, a student of **T. Khachaturian**, claimed that "moral purity is a condition for the ability to heal with bioenergy" (Kwolek, 2001–2002). American Christian researchers and therapists, Loyd and Johnson (2012) think similarly.

W. Pasterniak practised treatment and therapeutic "quantum training" with a method related to bioenergy therapy, but using images and music. It is like a borderline between sports medicine, psychology, pedagogy and training theory, where spiritual training is a form of therapy. The author conducted workshops with him several times and carried out numerous conversations (Pasterniak, 2012-2016), which also resulted in joint publications (Pasterniak & Cynarski, 2014; Cynarski, Błażejowski, & Pasterniak, 2016).

### Homeopathy

It is a field of medicine that functions alongside its mainstream. It is preferred by supporters of natural medicine and opponents of pharmacological treatment. To a greater extent, it is to be based on the body's immanent ability to self-organize, i.e. self-healing, rather than using appropriate doses of bioactive substances. It is supposed to be an interference in the cellular functions of the body at the level of the genetic code. This effect of trace amounts of active substances is supposed to cause self-regulation. **Lothar Sieber** prefers this

method of treatment [photo 3]. Werner Lind pointed to the relationship between traditional Chinese medicine and homeopathy (Lind, 1996: 525–526). It is about improving the circulation of energy in the body, i.e. blood, lymph, nerve impulses, as well as hormones, oxygen and nutrients carried by blood.



*Photo 3*  
GM Lothar Sieber at work [from the author's collection].

On the other hand, the method of L. Sieber includes the use of vitamin support, such as, in particular, larger portions of vitamin C (1000 mg per day, or even 3000 mg) or apricot and apple seeds (amygdalin called vitamin B17). Appropriate herbal teas are used and a special diet is recommended. GM Sieber draws on both the knowledge of the Far East and the knowledge of European representatives of natural medicine.

### ***Chi kung (qigong) / ki-keiko and tai chi (taiji)***

*Chi kung* – these are sets of exercises applied to improve health or maintain it at a good level. They are conducive to the proper functioning of the digestive system, the nervous system, the improvement of motor coordination skills, etc. (Kalisz, 1995). Similar breathing and energizing exercises in the *Idōkan Yōshin-ryū bujutsu idō* system are called *ki-keiko*.

*Tai chi*, especially the *Yang* style forms, when practised for health purposes have similar effects. *Chen* style fighting forms of *tai chi chuan (taiji quan)* are not recommended here. Only soft, flowing movements give a health effect similar to *chi kung* exercises. There is even a name *tai chi kung (taiji qong)* for the therapeutic distinction of *tai chi*.

## Training for health

The method of W. J. Cynarski entitled *Aiki-Jindō* was founded in 1993–1997. In 1997, *sōke* (leader, successor, main master) Hans Schöllauf 10<sup>th</sup> dan, President of Idokan Europe International, awarded Cynarski 5<sup>th</sup> dan in *ido* and called him a professor. On February 8, 2013, two German international martial arts federations awarded this trainer the highest rank of 10 dan *ido*, and the certificate was signed by Lothar Sieber 10 dan and Klaus Härtel 9 dan. At that time, K. Härtel also received 10 dan *ido*, but he focuses on teaching *jūdō-dō* techniques. W. J. Cynarski also has 9 dan *aiki-jūjutsu* (Swider, 2018).

*Aiki-Jindō* can be translated as "harmonization of energies in the path of humanity". It is a method of comprehensive self-regulation and harmonization of broadly understood health in connection with the practice of martial arts. It contains *ki-keiko* energizing exercises (modelled on *qigong*), massage and *shiatsu* and *aikitaishō* gymnastic exercises, relaxation and meditation exercises, dietary, hygienic and ethical and ascetic recommendations. It is a form of *bujutsu idō* and a component of the *Idōkan Yōshin-ryū budō* system. The theory here is based on the concept of systemic health theory, the mechanism of psychoneuro-immunology and the self-healing hypothesis (Weil, 1997). Its verification took place in confrontation with the knowledge and experience of sports doctors, such as Marvin Solit, PhD, Didier Rausseau (6 dan *judo*), Lothar Sieber (10 dan *jūjutsu*, *karate* and *idō*), Wong Kiew Kit (2001), and with the author's own experience over 45 years (*cf.* Annex. Relaxation exercise).

There are four stages here: 1) preliminary (learning to relax, concentrate, *ki-keiko*); 2) self-regulation I (acting on receptors, toning the nervous system); 3) self-regulation II (balancing the energy system); 4) striving for a state of harmony (striving for inner peace and in various relational systems with the outside world).

The diet should be varied, providing all the ingredients. Natural stimulants such as honey and propolis, garlic and horseradish are recommended. Among the stimulants, only cocoa, green tea, coffee, possibly small amounts of beer or wine are accepted. Both in nutrition and training, the principle of moderation should apply, i.e. nothing should be exaggerated. We know that a healthy diet can even prevent cancer and support the treatment of this serious disease, as in the method of Don Colbert, PhD (2016).

Training barefoot on the mat is automatically a foot massage, and many exercises performed on the back – a back massage. Additionally, *shiatsu*, *aikitaishō*, *kiatsu* (according to Koichi Tohei), sports self-massage and others are practised (e.g. elements of *yumeihō*, *dō-in*) (Mucha, 1997; Kasperczyk & Kmak, 1998). First of all, you should exercise regularly and do everything on both sides, i.e. symmetrically.

*Ki-keiko* are breathing exercises that improve lung capacity, strengthen the diaphragm and tone the emotional states (*cf.* Kondratowicz, 1996; Swami Rama,



Ballentine, & Hynes, 2000). Like mental training, it is a form of complementary exercise. There is also running, swimming, stretching, biological regeneration and body-hardening treatments. The original method of *Aiki-Jindō* has been described in detail as "*Bujutsu Ido – Method IPA 2009*" (Cynarski, 2009: 161–175; Cynarski & Sieber, 2015: 18–21).

Many methods of natural medicine are based on the ability of the living organism to heal itself, which was described by Andrew Weil, PhD (1997). Sometimes it is enough not to interfere in this process. Sometimes, however, it is worth helping by using, for example, relaxation exercises with positive autosuggestion (cf. Kondratowicz, 1982).

Science has not yet explained how acupuncture, acupressure and related methods work. The theory of energy meridians and energy circulation is more poetic than rational. However, that does not mean it does not work. In China, it has been used for two or even four thousand years, and in Europe it is supported by medical authorities (Garnuszewski, 1988).

There are ongoing disputes about the effectiveness of homeopathic remedies. Their operation has not yet been adequately explained. Similarly, there is no scientific explanation for bioenergetic interactions so far. There are actions against healers, but there are also voices in their defence:

A new media campaign against alternative medicine and healers has begun. This is nothing new, we have already observed similar "actions" many times. This is a one-sided action, because the spokesmen of the other side have nowhere to defend themselves (Kuncewicz, 2002).

Some paramedical methods are strongly opposed by the representation of academic medicine, which is probably right. Especially in the case of necessary surgical procedures, natural or alternative medicine is unlikely to work.

Proponents of the electrodynamic theory of life point to its discovery in the mid-twentieth century by Harold Saxton Burr and F.S.C. Northrop of Yale University (Bodnar, 2001: 50). Also in this method, the thing is about the body's self-regulation, but we talk about the bioenergetic field.

Are not the interests of the pharmaceutical industry the main source of conflict as advocates of natural/alternative medicine claim? Doctors themselves, being often drug addicts (belief in pills), do not know and do not understand alternative methods.

## **Learning centers and knowledge transfer.**

### ***Bujutsu ido* in martial arts tourism**

Does martial arts tourism imply learning *bujutsu idō*? *Bujutsu idō* – these are different traditions of natural medicine, knowledge transfer, teachers and cen-

tres – also outside of Asia. Master-teachers operate in different countries, also in Europe.

The transmission of the Japanese tradition (Japan → France) is carried out, for example, by *shihan* **Bernard Alain Lalandre**, 9 dan *idō-jutsu Takeda-ryū*, 9 dan *Tanaka-ryū*, *dai-hanshi*, *menkyō kaiden*; also 8 dan *aiki-jūjutsu Takeda-ryū*, 6 dan *Nihon kenpō*, *kyōshi*. Here traditional medicine is called *toyō-igaku* (Lalandre, 2022). It is strictly martial arts medicine present in the tradition of classical schools (*ko-ryū / ryū-ha*). According to this master-teacher, the teaching centres of this original Japanese tradition are three Japanese schools of martial arts, i.e. *Takeda-ryū*, *Tanaka-ryū* and *Yagyū Shingan-ryū* (Lalandre, 2022). He himself represents the first two of these schools. In *Takeda-ryū Nakamura-ha*, i.e. in the transmission of **Hisashi Nakamura's sōke** (10<sup>th</sup> dan), this tradition is simply called *bujutsu idō*, literally “martial arts medicine”. It was adopted under the same name in the IPA (Cynarski & Sieber, 2015). But already in *Takeda-ryū Maroto-ha* the name *idō-jutsu* functions (Cynarski, 2021: 33, 68). The leader here is *shihan* Roland J. Maroteaux (9 dan *aiki-jūjutsu*), who works closely with *shihan* Lalandre and also with *shihan* Ghislaine Driutti (4 dan *aiki-jūjutsu*) (Blach *et al.*, 2021: 62).

The transmission of the Chinese tradition [China → the rest of the world] is carried out by many teachers. One of the world's historical and more famous martial arts centres is the Shaolin Center. Shaolin is also an important religious centre (Chan / Zen Buddhism) and is a place of practising Chinese natural medicine (Shahar, 2008; Cynarski & Swider, 2017; Hung *et al.*, 2017; Su, 2017). Therapeutic gymnastics comes from *dao-yin* exercises, and these derive from breathing exercises, which there are also special massage techniques applied to (more: Lind, 1996: 72–74, 188–189, 688–692, 752–754, 930–931, 962–965). Today's *qigong* is practised both in schools of internal and external styles of *wushu / kung-fu*, as well as separately, only for health. This is taught by masters of various styles, such as GM **Chen Xiaowang** (*Chen taijiquan*). The Chinese tradition in the field of natural medicine is referred to, among others, by Prof. of sports science Keith R. Kernspecht (10<sup>th</sup> master degree of *Wing Tsun kung-fu*) from Germany, Prof. of acupuncture Mohsen Kazemi (7 dan *taekwondo* ITF) from Canada, and earlier also by Prof. of medicine Zbigniew Garnuszewski from Poland (*cf.* Garnuszewski, 1988).

In the Central European *Idokan* tradition, the leaders in teaching martial arts medicine (*bujutsu idō*) are especially EMAC Professor, *meijin* **Lothar Sieber** (10 dan *hanshi*) in Germany and **Romuald Włodyka** (8 dan *hanshi*) in Poland. The first of them runs an office in Weichs (Bavaria) [photos 3–4], 50km from Munich, where he also ran his martial arts school until recently. It is also an alternative medicine, natural medicine of Asian origin, combined with the achievements of specialists from Europe (iridology, homeopathy, etc.). The latter operates in Rzeszów and is based especially on traditions of Chinese origin (herbal medicine, acupuncture, *qigong / ki-keiko*).



Photo 4

Professor Lothar Sieber in the pose of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Weichs, Germany 2023 [from the author's collection]

Working here, Prof. **Wojciech J. Cynarski** (10 dan *ido* of *Idokan*) collaborated with the late pedagogy Prof. Wojciech Pasterniak (original methods of therapy and training) (Pasterniak & Cynarski, 2012, 2013, 2014), Prof. of medicine Ryszard Cieřlik (honorary 1<sup>st</sup> dan *bujutsu-idō*), Mieczysław Kwolek (bioenergo-therapist). In particular, he still collaborates with the above-mentioned L. Sieber, R. Włodyka, as well as with Prof. of medicine Helmut Kogel (8 dan *kyūsho-jutsu*), *shihan* Stanisław Cynarski (10 dan *aikijūjutsu, hanshi*), Jacek Cynarski, MD (endocrinologist) and many other physicians and physiotherapists (Cynarski & Sieber, 2015; Cynarski, 2018; Skrzeta *et al.*, 2021). He was also invited as an invited speaker to participate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Online International Conference on Traditional and Alternative Medicine – “Advancement and the Future of Traditional and Herbal Medicine” (August 29–30, 2022, Greenville, USA), International Experts Summit on Traditional and Alternative Medicine / IESTAM 2023 (Oct. 4–6, 2023, Dubai, UAE), etc. In this case, the acquired knowledge is, among others, the result of martial arts tourism, when under the guidance of GM L. Sieber, the Polish *shihan* learned martial arts (in particular *jūjutsu, karate* and *iaidō*), but also *bujutsu idō* [cf. photos 1–4].

In addition, there are similar traditions in *Tenshinshōden Katorishintō-ryū* (known under the name *te-ate*), in *Hakkō-ryū* and *Okuyama-ryū* (as *kohō shiatsu*), and in other schools of Far Eastern provenance. Traditional schools of Chinese martial arts function similarly. In turn, in the tradition of India, which is *kalaripayattu*, martial arts training is intertwined with massage and therapy, as well as with prayer.

An interesting phenomenon is also the natural medicine of Ukraine, developed, among others, by martial arts teachers, Grand Master **Volodymyr Pilat** (*Boyovy hopak*), *sensei Bogdan Kindzer* (*Kyokushin karate*) and others (*cf.* Stasjuk & Kindzer, 2012; Bolotov, 2018; Pylat, 2018). Here, methods from East Asia and our own national tradition are mixed and this heritage is enriched by the achievements of today's specialists. Kindzer, PhD combines Japanese methods of resuscitation – *kappō / kuatsu / katsu*, used in *jūjutsu* and *judo*, with methods of natural medicine (gymnastics, massage, relaxation, reflexotherapy, bioenergotherapy) (Stasjuk & Kindzer, 2012).

The relationship between practising martial arts and martial arts medicine consists in 1) the presence of medical or paramedical knowledge in the tradition and teaching of individual schools; 2) interest of martial arts teachers in medical knowledge and art; 3) teaching health and healing knowledge in the same places where martial arts are practised. Therefore, trips related to the practice of martial arts are sometimes combined with the acquisition of competences in the field of health and various forms of natural medicine, sports medicine and martial arts (*cf.* Sieber, Cynarski, & Mytskan, 2015; Cynarski & Sieber, 2015; Wąsik & Wójcik, 2017).

## The image of alternative medicine in mass culture

The trend for the East and local religions influenced the emergence of new, fashionable ideas, co-creating the eclectic New Age area. There is, among other things, a “vegetarian utopia”. It is supposed to be: “tolerance for all, regardless of race, religion, intelligence or number of paws” (Appleton, 2007: 36). So we do not eat animals or their products, and we do not wear fur, leather belts, or shoes.

The author knows several people from the martial arts community who have consistently followed a vegetarian diet for a long time. However, more people follow a varied, balanced diet. Views on diet are changing, whether it should be low-fat or not (*cf.* Kossobudzka, 2006). Generally, however, lovers of East Asian martial arts prefer the cuisine of that region of the world (Cynarski, 2000).

Nutrients and supplements such as vitamins, protein, isotonic (electrolytes), intensively advertised in the media are quite commonly used. But one can also read about the harmfulness of excessive use of minerals and vitamins (*cf.* Ambroziak, 2001; Pinkosz, 2014). Sometimes producers deliberately refer to the traditions of East Asia. On the bottle of “*Kombucha*” (fermented tea drink according to an ancient Chinese procedure) there is an image of a Chinese or Japanese *kyūdō* archer.

J. Schultz's yoga-derived relaxation and autogenic training method are widely accepted, with yoga being particularly fashionable as an alternative

sport. Academic medicine also accepts acupuncture (cf. Garnuszewski, 1988; Sapiński & Sapińska, 1990). Scientists lament that 88% of American adults accept alternative medicine (Shermer, 2002). In turn, enthusiasts point out the excellent effects of using acupuncture and homeopathy, balneotherapy and hippotherapy, phototherapy and reflexology, cupping and the use of leeches (Załoga, 2003).

The same energy of *ki* (Chinese *chi* or *qi*) can be used for healing (bioenergotherapy) and for fighting (the legendary “blow of the vibrating hand”) (Maziarczyk, 2003). It is not so much striking with the right “energy” (*Vis Vitalis*) as it is blocking its flow in a given organ. In turn, massage, e.g. *shiatsu*, helps to regulate this flow (Mucha, 1997; Kasperczyk & Kmak, 1998). The term “vital energy” includes the circulation of blood, lymph, hormones and nerve impulses. This is not about pseudo-spirituality (chakras, vibrations, cosmic energy), which, in an easier, light and pleasant version, is popular in a consumerist, hedonistically oriented society (Tekieli, 2023). It is about energy from well-coordinated body movement, energy from exercise physiology, and good health with emotional balance (the idea of integrating body, mind, and spirit).

Systemic health theory and holistic medicine are gaining supporters in the Western world and on a global scale. It is associated with martial arts in the form of the Feldenkreis method, *taiji*, *qigong*, acupuncture, etc. (by the way, psychophysical systems of martial arts have always treated man holistically). However, it lives its own life.

While “clinical” medicine studies and treats the human body, holistic medicine tries to go deeper. “Holistic” doctors cooperate with priests (spiritual health) and psychologists (mental health) (Szczeklik, 2003). Certainly, the condition for good health is an honest life, in accordance with normative ethics and the principles of faith – here Lothar Sieber points to the Decalogue (cf. Feynman, 1999; Grayling, 1999; Szmyd, 2013; Sieber, 2017).

The problem is fraudsters, without proper education and knowledge, who offer their services for a fee. Among bioenergotherapists it is quite difficult to verify their abilities and competences (cf. Konarska, 2002).

## Discussion and summary

The beneficial effect on health (both physical and mental) of practising martial arts is beyond doubt (Cynarski & Sieber, 2015; Smolen & Bernat, 2017). Regular training shapes a strong and active personality, reduces the level of aggressiveness, leads to an increase in health potential and better self-control.

On the other hand, contact combat sports, especially those practised competitively, are of a different nature and can lead to loss of health. The distinction is very important here. Martial arts and combat sports are defined completely

differently in martial arts theory; their goals and methods of training are also different. Martial arts and East Asian healing methods are subject to adaptation in the process of cultural dialogue. As such, they enter the areas of mass, physical and health culture in parallel (Cynarski, 2000).

Methods of healing or self-healing in martial arts, however, are a separate issue. They have been present in the history of martial arts for centuries. This is an area of interest of training theory and sports medicine, but ontologically co-created by various traditions of natural medicine such as massage, herbal medicine and psychotherapy. In some schools, martial arts medicine still functions today, under the Japanese name *bujutsu idō* or under other names (Cynarski, 2012, 2019a; Sieler, 2015; Cynarski & Sieber, 2015).

Various forms of health-promoting exercises are known (*cf.* Puza, 2007; Ubbes, 2008). Generally, systematic effort is more important than the type of diet (when providing the body with all the necessary ingredients) (Cynarski, 2019b). But it is important to maintain a generally hygienic lifestyle. And always be moderate.

The image of alternative (natural, holistic) medicine in mass culture is shaped by the media. It is not a homogeneous picture. Thus, the social reception here is also multifaceted. It is rare to associate traditional martial arts with natural medicine.

## **Annex. Relaxation exercise (authorial original method)**

While meditation is culturally foreign to Westerners, relaxation seems to be worth recommending. It is a way to strengthen the psyche, emotional balance, accelerate biological regeneration and improve the ability to concentrate. Like many other mental training exercises, it is derived from the cultural heritage and traditions of classical martial arts schools (Cynarski & Sieber, 2015).

Relaxation with simultaneous measurement of blood pressure is an exercise according to my own, original idea. As a result of its use, after a few weeks of exercise, you can learn to lower your blood pressure, for example, from 140mm of mercury to 117 (upper blood pressure) as a result of a few minutes of relaxation. Take a semi-recumbent position. Put the blood pressure cuff on your left arm and take the first measurement. Then relax, move your feet and toes. We use the game of imagination to direct excess blood to the feet (By the way, you can also fall asleep. The physiological effect is that excess blood from the brain actually goes to the lower limbs). After 1–2 minutes, we perform the second or the next measurement. Usually after a few minutes, when we are able to achieve a state of relaxation, the pressure drops significantly.

Also, as confirmed by various independent studies, *Yang taijiquan* and/or *qigong* exercises lead to emotional balance and improved body homeostasis (cf. Skrzeta *et al.*, 2021). These are slow movements, having a calming effect, improving eye-hand coordination, hormonal functions of the body and brain function. Of course, also various more dynamic types of martial arts improve motor coordination skills, overall fitness and efficiency of the body, hardening, motor memory and spatial orientation, increasing the positive potential of health.

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#### STATEMENT OF ETHICS

This study was conducted in accordance with the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki. The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the IPA Ethics Committee (No. A2/2023, Rzeszów, Poland). All participants provided written informed consent to participate in this study.

#### DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of the article *Ido as treatment, healing or self-healing. About the relationship between traditional East Asian martial arts and medicine.*

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