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The Process of Advancing Development of the Modern ACS System

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Abstract

The author of this article verifies the basic information on the new self-defence system called ACS, which has been in development since 2007 as a part of the new Atemi Combat System organisation (ACS). He then describes the process of creation and development of this system based on the research materials pertaining to technical program, master-rank exams, interviews with masters, author's own assessment and the gathered research material. After fifty years of practising jūjutsu, as well as other combat sports and martial arts, the author can easily describe and evaluate the actions of the German masters involved in the creation of this new self-defence system. The author aims at answering the following questions: What goals were set by the German masters in creating this self-defence system? Is ACS more similar to the combat system or is it a martial art instead?

Introduction

The spelling of Japanese terms and names in this article includes marking long sounds. The term *Atemi Combat System* pertains to a method directed at self-defence, created by German masters. ACS is an independent organisation cooperating with World Combat Association. ACS is being developed and verified since 2007, the most effective technical solutions from other combat system curricula are selected. Therefore, the developing curriculum was improved and modified so that after several years of study it attained curricular uniformity and became a more closed system.

Research methodology

The methodology of the history of physical culture deals with the research into cognitive actions relating to sports, recreation and tourism, development of particular sports disciplines as well as the phenomenon of the last century, i.e. martial arts within the area of physical culture. An important task tackled by the methodology of the history of physical culture is presenting various processes, mutual connections and interdependencies occurring in different periods of history, especially since we are personally experiencing the process of developing ACS – a phenomenon worth examining and describing. K. Warchoń

[2000] indicates: “Only a global methodological approach to the questions constituting the subject of given research is appropriate and has intended idiographic, nomothetic and axiological results.” In the methodology of research on the process of developing the modern ACS system the author analyses literature on the subject, German documents (curriculum, examination requirements for technical ranks) as well as employs methods of participant observation.

Description of the development of the modern ACS system

“Emergence of a new martial art or combat method is a process which can be described as **advancing development**. At the outset of a given martial art there is someone who systematises dispersed solutions, which are reached empirically, i.e., confronts specific solutions with experience with regard to their usefulness in combat, or relies on the experience of other practitioners. In time, the martial art gradually gains orderliness and uniformity, initial a priori elements start to emerge and a general set of rules governing combat techniques can be formulated. The martial art undergoes a shift from a more open system to a more closed one. The development process can potentially reach this stage during its creator's lifetime” [Stępnik 2009: 237].

"Creating new, synthetic and eclectic self-defence and combat systems is a manifestation of the modernistic approach to martial arts" [Cynarski 2000: 22].

In order to provide an accurate description of the development of the new Atemi Combat System it is necessary to answer several questions: What formula is ACS based on? What is its direction? In this methodological approach it is necessary to briefly introduce certain conceptual assumptions.

Combat system (not to be associated with the term *martial arts system*) – the term applies to new methods emerging currently, focused on effective self-defence – the *modern* systems. They are usually devoid of ethical and educational features, although that is not always the case. The curriculum is usually based on techniques adopted from various styles, aimed at effective self-defence and the ability to control the opponent's movements during combat. **Combat system is a subsystem of martial arts, but not every combat system is a martial art in itself.**

In this article – due to the fact that ACS technical program is, in principle, aimed at effective self-defence, and contains numerous technical and tactical solutions from *jūjutsu* – I undertook to define the self-defence system of *goshinjutsu*. Therefore, *goshinjutsu* is placed as a martial art based primarily on *jūjutsu* techniques [Cynarski 2004: 181]. Modern self-defence system Anti-Terrorkampf (ATK) was created in a similar fashion several decades ago [Słopecki 2006].

Goshinjutsu – self-defence system is a subsystem of *jūjutsu*, a utilitarian skill based on learning hand-to-hand combat and defence in the event of an attack with the use of various weapons, accounting for the spiritual aspect of martial arts, forming mental resilience, the ability to feel the opponent, anticipate the aggressor's actions, using a wide variety of *jūjutsu* combat techniques and their different technical combinations, which used with the appropriate tactics in combat – when a real technique responds to a real attack – allows for an effective defence against a simultaneous assault of several adversaries or an attack of a single opponent.

Therefore, the term self-defence is defined as an independent discipline with direct link to Far-Eastern martial arts. Self-defence is a defensive hand-to-hand combat system, adapted to various situations and circumstances, instances of danger and assault, and should be connected with physical and moral education, used to counteract aggression [Cynarski 2003: 170-171]. Modern self-defence is based on scientific principles, physics, biomechanics, anatomy, physiology, psychology and didactics as well as rationally developed methodology of teaching – it obviously derives from the experience

and principles of the most effective Far-Eastern martial arts and combat sports, mostly *jūjutsu*. In this definition of self-defence an important role is played not only by agility, deftness, speed, strength and technical skills, but also by spiritual values of the mind, will and character [Kondratowicz 1998].

Numerous senior practitioners of combat sports and martial arts underline the issues of self-defence ethics in their publications. Similarly, R.M. Kalina firmly emphasises the moral aspects of forming personality in defence education through self-defence martial arts [Kalina 1997].

Principles upon which ACS is built: effective, modern, real, practical, flexible, easily-internalised knowledge, improving skills in other martial arts, low equipment costs.

Educational objectives of ACS

The main technical and tactical objective of the training program is to form a habit of moving constantly during combat, intercepting the opponent's movements and redirecting them to rotational (circular) motion. The learning priority of this system is based on controlling the opponent's behaviour effectively.

ACS is to be used for defensive purposes only, the person defending himself or herself should get out of harm's way as quickly as possible. The techniques used on an opponent should be fast, surprising and direct.

ACS contains many technical elements of *jūjutsu*, the main focus of teaching this specialisation is based on the knowledge of *jintai kyūshō*, i.e. vital points (for example, location of major arteries, nerve plexuses), which are targeted by the attacks (*atemi*) or grapples for maintaining control (*osae-waza*) [Kogel 2008]. The training consists of learning to defend against staves, knives, bottles, and defence against an aggressor with the use of everyday objects (pen, newspaper, umbrella).

In order to learn *atemi* techniques effectively, a student is required to devote a considerable portion of his or her time to learn theoretical subjects such as first aid, anatomy, physiology, psychology, law and basics of *budō*.

Based on the main principles set by the creators of ACS, it can be classified as a subsystem of *gō-budō*, which also includes *goshinjutsu* – self-defence [Cynarski 2004: 181]. The creators of ACS claim that it is a modern and effective self-defence system, whose primary objectives constitute the study of effective self-defence and control of opponent's actions in combat. **The most important principle of this modern system is the fact that its practitioners**

should understand it as a system of effective self defence, used exclusively for this single purpose.

As the very name suggests the curriculum of this system is primarily focused on the use of *atemi* techniques (strike techniques) in combat. Strikes or grapples are directed at nerved points of the body (strikes at vital parts of the body). Deliberate and effective use of shock strike techniques, using pressure points on the opponent's body combined with joint lock techniques allows the person defending to counter the attack with little force and control the aggressor's actions. The authors of this program in their educational objectives claim that since the system is flexible, ACS techniques are easily internalised, anyone can learn them – regardless of age, sex, social status. At higher levels of learning this system is supplemented by such techniques as *jūdō*, karate, *jūjutsu* and ATK.

The author of this article calls into question the effective and deliberate teaching of this system to everyone and reflects on the construction of the technical program based on shock techniques aimed at vital parts of the body. The ability to use pressure techniques in a proper way is based on in-depth teaching of human anatomy, which should be based on moral foundation. Through my own practical experience and knowledge stemming from the ethical and educational principles of *jūjutsu*, I can employ the “iron-clad rule” that teaching these combat techniques in the early stages of education should be based on the removal of the possible damage caused by the use of techniques directed at vital parts of the body. If the curriculum does not include teaching prevention and removal of the side effects of the techniques used, a different structure of the technical program should be adopted. With regard to teaching these techniques to civilians, I have ethical reservations resulting from the increasing aggression of modern societies. Shaping the personalities of students practising ACS should be done with great care for the value system following from traditional martial arts curricula.

Atemi Combat System is based on § 32.2.StGB (Germany).

Advantages of Atemi Combat System

- simple examination structure
- modernity of the system is based on its flexibility
- efficiency (free choice of attire until 1st dan)
- possibility of continuing the training in one's local *dōjō*, through local training courses
- compact training courses
- representing the system in various international training courses

- introducing a teacher-trainer into the course of events and training courses
- significant media coverage in the largest sports magazines of Europe
- beneficial and transparent structure of World Combat Association.

Technical program and technical rank requirements within ACS

The curriculum is divided into several elements:

- drop training, until 3rd *kyū* involves drop training on a mat, from 2nd *kyū* – on hard surface
- basic techniques – defence against various attacks (elements of self-defence)
- additional techniques – attack moves with the use of various *atemi* techniques, learning to use a variety of everyday objects in both attack and defence, learning the use of weapons (short staff, sword, knife), tests of breaking wooden boards, techniques adapted from other martial arts and combat sports
- theory, etiquette, first aid, anatomy, *atemi* points, *kuatsu*, explaining how the technique works, legal regulations concerning necessary defence, what is Combat System, knowledge regarding training methodology.

The basic program includes self-defence skills consisting of techniques formulated in the program for levels spanning from 5th to 1st *kyū* and are obligatorily passed up to the level of 3rd *dan*. From 2nd *kyū* level only attack techniques are given – the examinee needs to demonstrate the effective use of combat techniques, from 1st *kyū* techniques are performed to the left side. The period of *kyū* rank education can take no less than 40 months.

Additional ACS program requires the trainee to prepare an independent interpretation of combat techniques for the purposes of effective self-defence. The student chooses his or her own set of combat techniques and adapts it to real combat situations, according to each level of master ranks. Master-level trainee is required to perform combat techniques on both sides, in all directions, with particular focus on controlling the opponent's actions, moving in such a way that will force the attackers into rotational movement (circular motion).

In order to earn master-level ranks, the examinee needs to fulfil basic requirements: be of legal age (18 years old), present a certificate of clean criminal record, pass a theoretical knowledge exam, complete a first aid course, present a written paper, pass a technical exam. 1st – 5th *dan* rank education must span at least 15 years. 6th – 10th honorary *dan* ranks are awarded in a fashion similar to

advancement in *jūjutsu* martial art. Each level of master rank technical program is supplemented by new combat techniques and requires the student to know the basic and additional techniques used at student-level ranks. 1st *dan* curriculum encompasses additional techniques adapted from specialisations like *jūdō*, *karate*, *jūjutsu*; *atemi* techniques are performed with everyday objects, performing armed and unarmed combat techniques while moving and in circular motion is perfected. Each master has to create *atemi-kata* (*Kokyo-Kata*) independently, armed as well as unarmed, with a defined number of moves (15-25). Before a *dan* rank can be awarded, the candidate must present a certificate of clean criminal record, follow the rules concerning training period between individual ranks and reach the appropriate age. A training program arranged in this way enables the education to be controlled according to the established curriculum.

The work on the new self-defence system started in 2007, shortly after World Combat Association was established. The main team responsible for its development consisted of three people: Olaf van Ellen (6th *dan* ACS), Peter Böschen (4th *dan* ACS), Romano Krause (2nd *dan* ACS). The team is in charge of conducting training courses and familiarises everyone with the new system, education stations include Asia, the USA, Europe. All of the aforementioned masters have practices various combat sports and martial arts for many years. They were in search of a self-defence system that would meet their expectations (since the 1990s). With vast knowledge and experience in many fields of hand-to-hand combat they decided to empirically systematise an array of combat techniques and dispersed solutions. Many years of experience in practising various combat systems allowed the team to select the techniques which, in the team's opinion, are most useful and effective in a threatening situation. In time, based on several dozen methodical training courses, due to adding new technical and tactical solutions into the training system, the technical program is becoming more systematic and uniform, first a priori elements emerge and a general set of rules governing combat techniques is formulated. ACS, the system of modern self-defence, transitioned into being more closed.

Masters creating this system can be described as people seeking out new challenges, guided by their own experience in participant observation, looking for new training solutions. They use their own experience as well as the experience of other experts in the field of martial arts. Their education principles are based on the effectiveness of ACS techniques in a real combat situation because only

then a practitioner can master the necessary number of technical and tactical solutions, which can later be used in non-standard circumstances. The training system is based primarily on the technical program of the martial art of *jūjutsu*, certain solutions are developed and adapted to the new teaching program.

According to research conducted by Słopecki [2009], pertaining to *jūjutsu* training programs, empiricist attitude is the hallmark of the creators of the "modern *jūjutsu*" system as well as various *jūjutsu* martial arts schools. Currently, the vast majority of various organisations and schools with *jūjutsu* as part of their name employ the "modern *jūjutsu*" approach. Only a small percentage of schools can be classified as traditional *jūjutsu* schools following the rationalistic approach. The study reveals that schools based on tradition employ an element of empiricist approach in achieving their objectives. The modernist approach with a combination of rationalistic and empiricist elements is prevalent, as Stepnik points out in his article [Stepnik 2009: 236]. James, the author of *Pragmatism*, argues that in reality examples of purely empiricist or rationalistic attitudes are extremely rare, whereas a combination of the two is more common [cf. James 1998: 43-47; 2004: 19-20]. The same combined approach to teaching objectives was adopted by the creators of ACS.

The traditional outlook on martial arts requires a rationalistic approach, no new solutions pertaining to combat techniques themselves were invented in our times. In accordance with the principles of modern training changes occurred in the approach to the very processes of training and teaching. The process of rationalisation of particular combat techniques needs to take place in the minds of people representing given combat styles or methods. A person who believes that he or she created a new combat technique is gravely mistaken since one can only perfect methods of teaching combat techniques. In my book devoted to methodology of teaching martial arts I emphasise that teaching combat techniques should be conducted in a dynamic motion in circumstances resembling real combat [Słopecki 2012: 62, 70, 107, 129, 148-152].

The image of noble martial art can be distorted rapidly when new solutions in teaching self-defence are not followed by the entire martial arts axiology. It is necessary and advisable that the ethical and educational values of *jūjutsu* martial art have their place in modern self-defence systems.

Therefore, modifications to combat techniques should follow the new, emerging needs. Self-defence is one such field, which is not concerned with the purity of form but with high effectiveness in practice. The objectives, ideology, methods of training as

well as the technical outlook on martial arts are changing. The technical aspect of karate, *jūjutsu*, the synthetic systems and the art of self-defence (*goshinjutsu*) is constantly perfected. Training methods are also modified [Cynarski 2004: 219].

Discussing the results

The ACS curriculum is still subject to empirical testing, similarly to the rationalisation process of “modern *jūjutsu*” system [Slopecki 2012: 34]. Draeger points to the process of rationalisation in various martial arts, giving aikido as an example. Aikido underwent advancing rationalisation, accelerating after the death of Ueshiba, leading to the creation of many rationalised systems collectively named *aikido* [Draeger 2006b: 137]. Similar situation is observed in other combat systems, since their main educational objective is combat effectiveness they need to constantly confront their technical solutions with combat experience. The process of advancing rationalisation of *krav maga* is evidenced by employing elements of on-the-ground combat in the curriculum, adopted from Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* [Levine, Whitman 2007]. Due to Lee’s principles Jeet Kune Do (JKD) could undergo significant changes since its creation. As a result, Jeet Kune Do “utilises all methods, all combat techniques and means which are of use to it” [Lee 1975: 11-14]. Currently, JKD employs more elements of the so-called grappling martial arts like Brazilian *jiu-jitsu*, sambo or wrestling. A similar process of rationalisation of martial arts took place during the creation of an effective combat system for the police by an American officer “Scientific Self-Defence” Fairbairn [1931]. Similarly, the process of rationalisation takes place in the modern ACS self-defence system, in which combat effectiveness is considered the main objective.

Self-defence is a system of hand-to-hand combat adapted to various dangerous situations, threatening circumstances as well as assault, it should be connected with physical and moral education, serving as a means of countering aggression [Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2003: 170-171].

Summary and conclusion

Based on the thoughts of *jūjutsu*, *jūdō*, karate and ATK masters new techniques are adopted, adjusted to the new combat reality. Until now, within the ACS training program it was possible to systematise certain technical and tactical solutions, which are arrived at empirically, i.e. by

confronting particular solutions with experience in view of their effectiveness in defensive combat or based on the experience of other practitioners. Orderliness and uniformity of the curriculum were achieved, and as a result a general set of rules governing particular techniques could be formulated. The development of ACS self-defence system can be described as a process of advancing rationalisation, which means it will reach its final stage of rationalisation, and, perhaps, it will retain its empirical and open character, adapting to new challenges. ACS is a system open to innovative solutions, the terms “attack” or “combat technique” in this teaching system are empirical and open. It is a system modified and adapted to the new reality of life, it employs new solutions of scientific theories of sports training, technical and tactical solutions from various combat sports and martial arts. It is important to note that the creators of this system rely on the principles of the old ethical and educational martial arts system, and that the curriculum accounts for elements pertaining to ethics. Drawing from the wealth of Japanese martial arts (*jūjutsu* in particular) is desired as it uses their utilitarian, educational potential in training military personnel and uniformed services [Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2003: 173].

The creators of ACS introduced effective methods of propagating this system through planned, purposeful training events, seminars backed by trade press, compact training in various countries and cities. The idea of education in various national organisation and different countries effects in positive international recognition for the new educational system of ACS. Simple examination structure is based on the system’s flexibility. An experienced master representing a different style of martial arts is able to understand the principles of this system, incorporate it in his own *dōjō* and expand it through participation in seminars and local compact training courses.

The modern ACS system is being created based on many years of experience in practising martial arts. It can be defined as an independent discipline related directly to *jūjutsu*, to which the creators of this system are closely tied. In the view of self-defence represented by the ACS curriculum, apart from physical values, technical and tactical skills, an important role is played by spiritual and intellectual values, which should form the personalities of both the teacher and the student.

There is a significant difference between ACS and various combat system with regard to main objectives and principles. The authors of this system direct it towards civilians and emphasise that it is supposed to be used in teaching effective self-

defence, not combat in its general sense. Utilitarian *combat* systems were created with uniformed services in mind and are geared towards their needs in particular. In principle they are based on techniques used to quickly eliminate an opponent. In the lighter, less brutal form – used by the police, in the brutal form – used by special military groups. Eastern fighting techniques are often used instrumentally in *combat* systems [Cynarski 2000: 22]. It is important to note that *combat* systems are usually devoid of ethical elements [Słopecki 2006: 105]. Rushed *combat* courses are merely a substitute for skills in hand-to-hand combat [Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2003: 173; cf. Cynarski 2013].

ACS training system and combat systems are vastly different. ACS training is spread over a long period of time and divided into specific advancement levels, the technical program up to 5th *dan* is spread over twenty years of training. Dangerous techniques are taught only at a higher, more advanced level of education. The period and system of teaching are similar to the procedures used in teaching martial arts. The authors of this modern self-defence system in their objectives and teaching methodology were able to combine physical and moral education as well as counteracting aggression. They used the knowledge contained in martial arts skilfully without depriving it of ethical substance. The idea of creating this system (style) is slowly proving to be correct and is finding its way to the mentality of people all over the world.

The author of this article calls into question the statement made by the creators of this system claiming that "this system can be learned by anyone." He draws special attention to the ethical aspect of this system so that the process of shaping the personalities of students is carried out with great care for the value system following from traditional martial arts curricula.

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Proces postępującej racjonalizacji nowoczesnego systemu ACS

Słowa kluczowe: System samoobrony ACS, sztuki walki, *jūjutsu*, samoobrona, system *combat*

Streszczenie

W artykule tym autor podjął się zadania opisu procesu powstawania oraz oceny nowoczesnego systemu samoobrony ACS. System ten jest tworzony przez mistrzów niemieckich posiadających duży bagaż doświadczeń w praktykowaniu różnych sztuk walki, przede wszystkim *jūjutsu*. Z tego powodu program nauczania systemu ACS w większości swej treści bazuje na rozwiązaniach technicznych sztuki walki *jūjutsu*.

Opierając się na założeniach twórców tego systemu (Olaf van Ellen, Peter Böschen, Romano Krause), można ten kierunek zaliczyć do podsystemu *gō-budō*, który obejmuje swym zasięgiem *goshinjutsu* – samoobronę. Tak więc pojęcie samoobrony definiuje się jako samodzielną dziedzinę z bezpośrednim nawiązaniem do dalekowschodnich sztuk walki. Na rzecz tego opracowania autor podjął się próby opracowania definicji samoobrony (*goshinjutsu*). W programie nauczania ACS udało się usystematyzować poszczególne rozwiązania techniczno-taktyczne, do których twórcy tego systemu doszli w sposób empiryczny, konfrontując poszczególne rozwiązania z doświadczeniem pod kątem ich przydatności w walce obronnej bądź też opierając się na doświadczeniach innych praktyków. Udało się uzyskać systematyczność i spójność tego systemu nauczania, w wyniku czego powstał zbiór zasad ogólnych, którym podporządkowane są poszczególne techniki. Proces rozwoju systemu samoobrony ACS można opisać jako proces postępującej racjonalizacji, czyli gdy osiągnięty końcowy etap racjonalizacji, być może będzie miał ciągle charakter empiryczny i otwarty, przystosowujący do nowych wyzwań. ACS jest systemem otwartym na nowatorskie rozwiązania. Terminy „atak” lub „technika walki” w tym systemie nauczania mają charakter empiryczny i otwarty. Jest systemem modyfikowanym i dostosowywanym do nowych realiów życia; korzysta z nowych rozwiązań naukowych teorii treningu sportowego, rozwiązań techniczno-taktycznych sztuki walki *jūjutsu* i ATK. Ważne jest, że twórcy tego systemu odwołują się do zasad starego systemu etyczno-wychowawczego sztuk walki oraz, że w swoim programie nauczania uwzględniają treści dotyczące etyki. Autorzy tego nowoczesnego systemu samoobrony w swoich celach i metodyce nauczania potrafili połączyć edukację fizyczną z wychowaniem moralnym i przeciwdziałaniem agresji.