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A Review of a book by Dr Juliusz Piwowarski entitled ”Self-improvement and Safety in the Samurai Code of Bushidō”

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Juliusz Piwowarski (2011), *Samodoskonalenie i bezpieczeństwo w samurajskim kodeksie Bushidō* (“Self-improvement and Safety in the Samurai Code of Bushidō”) in Polish, Collegium Columbinum, Kraków, pp. 393 + List of publications of Collegium Columbinum.

A new interesting and valuable book has been published, which the author of this article, next to Prof. Trzciński, has contributed to as the author of the editorial review. The reviewed study is the aftermath of the doctoral dissertation and its fragments were earlier consulted with the author of this text, which, however, does not change the originality of author’s theses and his responsibility for them.

The author of the book is a person who has devoted most of his life to ways of martial arts. He successfully implements the *shūgyō* method basic for the humanistic studies in this field. Practical achievements in *karatedō* are confirmed by his high master rank – 8 dan. This knowledge and rich experience fill pages of his book. This is an authentic ”martial way (*budō*) and a way of science” worthy past samurai and karate masters. And this may be the greatest value of the reviewed book that is the knowledge based on long experience and serious studies of martial arts [cf.: Cynarski 2000].

Evaluation of the content and the scientific level of the publication

Dr Piwowarski presents historical and cultural background concerning foundation and development of karate and related martial arts. This is not, however, a historical work with detailed factography, but a highly original concept of history of ”the spiritual way” in martial arts. The author follows expertly

the achievements of the outstanding representatives of Japanese *budō* and the content of the codes present in tradition of martial arts. The theses are properly documented. The stress is rightly placed upon Japanese chivalry code of *Bushidō*, which is the main canon or inspiration for the creators of ethos of majority of contemporary martial arts of Japanese provenance. In the evolution of martial arts Piwowarski took into account particular input of European creators of the idea of *jūdō-dō* and *idō* (pp. 211-212). This ideological revolution is indeed still existing. In the text there are a few minor misspellings in German names and surnames which may be forgiven (e.g. *Schule*, E. Rahn, p. 207).

Self-realization is a basic concept for the humanistic psychology. In Piwowarski’s book, in the conceptual approach of J. Ratajczak [2002], this concept serves to explain the way of a warrior. The author of the book compares martial arts to systems of psychophysical self-realization, not to combat sports, which is the most suitable. He stresses the spiritual dimension and points to different spheres of combat for example in connection with the levels of combat in Tibetan concept of *śambhali* (s. 89). Similarly it refers to the interpretations of ”the way of a warrior” in the humanistic theory of martial arts (HTMA) [cf.: Maliszewski 1996; Sieber, Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2007].

The conclusions of the research (it was mainly participative observation, interviews with experts and literature analysis) that is the summary of author’s search can be found in a short *Conclusion* (pp. 361-363). Such a reflection is present in the works of S. Tokarski, M. Maliszewski, A. Szyszko-Bohusz, R. M. Kalina i W. J. Cynarski. None of them, however, exposed the role of ”karate way” as a method of self-realization from the religious and psychological perspective.

Juliusz Piwowarski explains with great expertise the links of martial arts with religious aspects and problems of safety and self-realization. The author of the book, as a leader of Polish *all-style karatedō*, designs and implements described here ethics of "the warrior's way" which is particularly valuable. Worth mentioning is the fact that methodology of *budō* studies is united, in its specification, with a self-realization process understood holistically.

Remarks and suggestions

I am opposed to the identification of Japanese martial arts in its ideological sphere with Buddhism. For example Okinawa karate has its roots in Confucianism. My suggestion was to express more explicitly the fact that *sumō* and other schools of martial arts of past Japan – from *kenjutsu* to *aikidō* stem mainly from the cultural tradition of *shintō*. The Buddhists probably would wish it to be different. There is no common denominator. Even *Bushidō* is not ethically clear and universally accepted [cf.: Stępnik 2009].

The author refers mainly to a humanized version of *Bushidō*. He skilfully avoids simplifications and understands the sense of spirituality of martial arts in past Asia and contemporary martial arts practised on a global scale. Axiology of this fragment of culture is however very heterogeneous. It would be a good idea if the reader did not get the impression that martial arts are invariably connected with religion, magic or mysticism. The person worth mentioning is Dr Jigorō Kanō who created new *budō* and replaced the old mysticism with new moral and educational way. His person is presented, inter alia, by Satoshi Shimizu [2008; cf.: Rżany, Cynarski 2001].

In the reviewed book we find references to the humanistic theory of martial arts (HTMA). I think that getting to know a few of my books [Cynarski 2004, 2006, 2009] and numerous publications in a specialist Scientific Year's Issue "Ido – Ruch dla Kultury / Movement for Culture" could help to strengthen theoretically the discussed content or allow the reader to complement the knowledge concerning the issues which were only signalled.

About bibliography

The study, in its *Bibliography* (pp. 365-393), contains a sufficient number of positions. They are, however, mainly publications in Polish and a great part is composed of popular literature. The author knew how to make good use of such sources – opinions

of masters, their biographies and autobiographies etc. There are few references to the articles from the scientific periodicals. It may be a good idea to enrich the contents of the work and bibliography with some other items. In order to develop further studies and research concerning the phenomenon of martial arts I suggest referring to the following items of subject literature.

The topic of global popularity of martial arts and combat sports, as well as "tourism of martial arts" appeared in publications, for example, by Cynarski [2010]. The subject of *budō* and its contemporary reception was discussed by, inter alia, Szymańska and Trzeciński [1994], Cynarski [2006; also: Cynarski, Sieber, Litwiniuk 2006] and Sasaki [2009]. The subject of combat (from its physical, technical and spiritual aspects) and spirituality appeared for example in the works of Sieber, Cynarski i Litwiniuk [2007] and Szyszko-Bohusz [2003]. There are also more scientific studies regarding religious aspects [Cynarski 2004a; Reguli 2007]. Apart from basic items mentioned above, a few other writers wrote about HTMA Sterkowicz [2001], Kosiewicz [2005], Cieszkowski and Sieber [2006], Kowalczyk [2008] and Obodyński [2008]. Kick-boxing and all style karate were discussed by Ziemiński [2001], Ambroży and Piwowarski [2008], Cynarski and Ziemiński [2010]. One could also refer to the works of the contemporary American authors (A. Bäck, J. Donohue, T. Green, D. Jones, D. Klens-Bigman, M. Maliszewski), European ones (R. Habersetzer, R. Maroteaux, K. Moegling, Z. Reguli, M. von Saldern, L. Sieber, K. Weis) and others.

To sum up it can be stated that the study is written on a very good level. The book contains truly interesting, original ideas – a new outlook on karate and martial arts as equipment for individual self-realization. It is a valuable position, let alone, one of the very few published in Poland and containing in-depth scientific reflection referring to the cultural phenomenon of martial arts – particularly in its religious connections. The above remarks and suggestions have basically a discursive character and do not diminish a high evaluation of the merits (in substance and methodology) of the reviewed book. In my opinion the book is worth reading.

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Recenzja książki dr. Juliusza Piwowarskiego pt. „Samodoskonalenie i bezpieczeństwo w kodeksie samurajskim Bushidō”

Słowa kluczowe: samodoskonalenie, droga wojownika, sztuki walki

Artykuł recenzyjny

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