

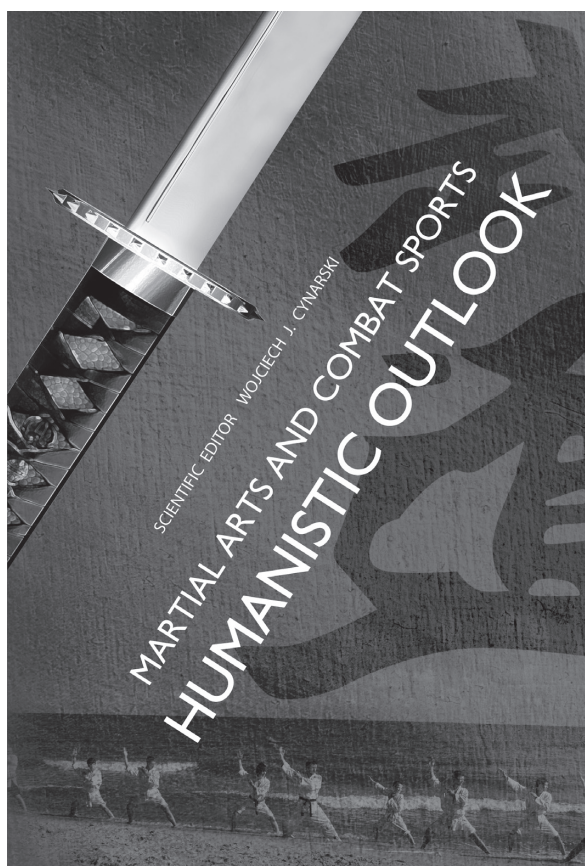
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“To live a better life than the average human ...”. A New Book on Martial Arts and Combat Sports / „Życie lepszym życiem niż przeciętny człowiek...”. Nowa książka o sztukach walki i sportach walki

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Wojciech Jan Cynarski (ed.), *Martial Arts and Combat Sports – Humanistic Outlook*, A humanistic library edition “Biblioteka Lykeion”, Vol. 9 (Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2009), pp. 171. ISBN 978-83-7338-439-2.



According to Wojciech J. Cynarski and Piotr Kurek ‘incomplete knowledge of the martial arts world, one-sided approaches or unjustified generalizations often result in improper perception of martial arts’ (p. 57), whereas Abel A. Figueiredo considers that ‘to appreciate the significance of martial arts and combat sports is to understand their nature’ (p. 22). A new book edited by Wojciech J. Cynarski

and entitled *Martial Arts and Combat Sports – Humanistic Outlook* make accomplishing of the postulate easier in a great measure.

The ninth volume of the “Biblioteka Lykeion” renowned series is a compilation of texts written by an international team of scientists (from the Czech Republic, Germany, Japan, Poland, Portugal and Spain). The majority of the papers were presented at the 2nd International Scientific Conference of Experts – Researchers on Martial Arts and Humanists “Martial Arts, combat sports, humanism” (*budō, kakugi, jindō*) that took place in Targowiska and Krosno (south-eastern Poland) in 2008. The proceedings book was published under the auspices of the Rzeszów University being one of the leading centers of academic research on martial arts in the world.

The collected material should be convenient to the enthusiasts of different martial arts and combat sports aspects (the methodological, educational, historical, social and practical ones): experienced specialists in the subjects as well as absolute beginners. The cognitive values of the articles are very high, while extended lists of references enclosed to every chapter can facilitate further explorations.

All the papers could be divided into several categories. Some of them refer to the question of scientific studies concerning the martial arts and combat sports issues. Kazimierz Obodyński presents the stages of development of the research on the disciplines in Poland. In his comprehensive article major journals, institutions and conferences devoted to the question are described. Depicting

the main currents, the author also profiles some of the most prominent researchers. Carlos Gutiérrez García and Mikel Pérez Gutiérrez touch more or less the same topic with reference to Spain. Their perspective is quite different, however. They try to sum up the Spanish contribution to the general knowledge on martial arts and combat sports in the light of publications on the topics written up to 2008. On the other hand Abel A. Figueiredo points out some new perspectives of potential projects in the field, while Wojciech J. Cynarski and Piotr Kurek carry out a brilliant comparative analyses of the scientific approach towards the issues of martial arts and combat sports dominating in the USA against a background of the outlook preferred in the environment of the Polish researchers.

Other articles concern the social role of martial arts and combat sports in different countries (in the past and in the modern times). Taketo Sasaki shows *budō* as an element of social life that has been deeply rooted in the Japanese culture and traditions. Lothar Sieber, Wojciech J. Cynarski, Jan Słopecki and Piotr Ziemiński discuss the possibilities of using the disciplines in the process of patriotic education of the youths. Andrzej Szyszko-Bohusz maintains the usefulness of the activities in the programme of holistic pedagogy (regarding his original but somewhat controversial theory of genetic immortality that has been developed since the 1990s).

The martial arts and combat sports trainers will probably pay their particular attentions to the interesting reflections of Stanisław Sterkowicz. Based on the questionnaire answered by Polish judo instructors and competitors he managed to indicate several factors differentiating the top trainers from the minor ones. Next Abel A. Figueiredo's suggestions refer to the ways of introduction of combat sports into Physical Education lessons in different types of schools.

The text by Stanisław Tokarski and Waldemar Sikorski as well as the one by Wojciech J. Cynarski, Kazimierz Obodyński, Artur Litwiniuk and Lothar Sieber were written from the historical points of

view. They describe the ways of development and diffusion of far eastern martial arts and combat sports in certain geographical regions in the contexts of progressive transculturation. Tokarski and Sikorski's study is devoted mainly to the contribution of legendary Japanese master Jigoro Kano (who lived in the era of rapid mental and cultural changes) to the process of shaping judo as a modern and worldwide popular sports discipline. The authors of the latter article focus on the history of international federations of far eastern martial arts and the circumstances of their foundations. Zdenko Reguli and Michal Vit's paper belongs to the same category throwing light on certain similarities occurring between the ancient Greek ideal of *kalokagathia* and the lofty principles of Japanese *aikidō*.

Two of the articles included in the book (Dorota Pawlik's advanced analyses of the crucial meaning of the Maori Haka dance for the overall New Zealand's culture and Mirosław Ponczek's interesting study on Pope Pius XI's teaching concerning physical culture) do not refer to the question of martial arts and combat sports directly. Nevertheless they constitute quality complements for the main-theme productions and add much variety to the scope of discussed problems.

Undoubtedly, martial arts and combat sports can play a beneficial role in the physical, moral, social and intellectual development of a person (under certain conditions). All the above mentioned text show undeniable values connected to the disciplines. Proper attitude towards the activities allows their practitioners – according to Yasuo Yuasa words – '*to live a better life than the average human who is lost in society*' (pp. 15–16). On account of the editor's assumptions the discussed compilation obviously cannot be considered as a complex introductory manual to the world of martial arts and combat sports. Nevertheless, the book allows us to take a significant step in the path leading to deepened understanding and demythologization of the spheres of human activity.