

MARTIAL ARTS TOURISM

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A scientific and martial arts event in a new, pandemic situation; casus of one conference *anno domini* 2020

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Abstract

Problem and Aim. The aims were: 1) factography with the evaluation of the scientific event, 2) case study of the event in terms of the institutionalization of fighting arts research and martial arts tourism.

Method. Qualitative methods were used: expanded discourse analysis, visual anthropology, autoethnography, and participant observation. The analysis included, inter alia, several dozen photographs.

Results. The IMACSSS conference was described and reviewed as a scientific event that was organized in a hybrid mode, with direct and remote participation. The functioning of the scientific organization ten years after its establishment was determined. This mixed or hybrid conference was the first of its kind and combined with a sports event.

Conclusions. It was an important event for the research community on fighting arts and was a success for the organizers. It can be expected that remote and hybrid conferences will continue to dominate for some time.

Introduction

Martial arts tourism is developed by numerous sports, social, and some scientific organizations. The IMACSSS (the International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society) is a special case. An international congress and IMACSSS conference are here a kind of pretext for a broader statement about cultural tourism and martial arts tourism, as well as about the directions of development of scientific institutions in the area of fighting arts. The very review of the conference is its factography and evaluation.

“We can talk about martial arts tourism in at least two meanings: as a socio-cultural fact and as an area of scientific reflection” [Sieber, Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2007: 167]. We are interested in both meanings here. Scientific tourism and martial arts tourism are combined in the case of scientific events devoted to the issues of fighting arts [Cynarski 2020a; Blach, Swider, Sieber 2020]. Such are the congresses and conferences of the IMACSSS, the largest specialist scientific society, bringing together specialists in the field of combat sports and martial arts [Kubala 2011, 2013]. These conferences, and the accom-

panying workshops, galas, shows, or competitions, are the magnets of this particular form of cultural tourism, in the non-entertainment variety [Cynarski 2015a]. The conference reports themselves give a picture of the events, most often without reflecting on martial arts tourism [*cf.* Johnson 2018, 2019]. As a result, they are a greater source of knowledge about the activity of scientific institutions and the development of individual sub-disciplines or scientific specialties than about the cultural phenomenon of “martial arts tourism”.

For some researchers, science tourism is especially field research trips. It is then in other words “scientific and research-oriented tourism”, where the scientists are treated as travelers [Slocum, Kline, Holden 2017; *cf.* Cynarski, Swider 2017a]. It can also be a study trip [Cynarski, Sieber, Mytskan 2015; Cynarski *et al.* 2017]. Meanwhile, the most common research trip, regardless of the type of scientific discipline practiced, is a conference trip (all scientific meetings, congresses, symposia, etc.). Despite the fact that it is a common area of business and congress tourism on the one hand, and educational and cultural tourism on the other, Cynarski [2015b] treats it as scientific tourism *par excellence* [*cf.* Cynarski,

Duricek 2014; Sawicki 2016]. When the conference also concerns martial arts and / or combat sports, it is a “scientific and martial arts-oriented tourism” [cf. Cynarski, Duricek 2014; Cynarski 2015b: 41-70].

Martial arts tourism can also be considered from the perspective of the General Theory of Fighting Arts, GTFA [Cynarski 2019a], or strictly - in a cultural anthropological framework [Miller 2010; Raimondo 2011; Griffith 2016; Skowron-Markowska 2019]. It is also sometimes considered within the conceptual category of sports tourism [cf. Cynarski 2017; Malchrowicz-Mosko, Munsters 2018]. However, the cultural dialogue carried out here will always be a very important, even significant aspect, especially since it is favored by both tourism, especially cultural tourism, and martial arts studies [Tokarski 2011; Cynarski 2014]. Martial arts tourism is a manifestation of cultural dialogue occurring in the environment of enthusiasts and lovers of martial arts, as a kind of inculcation. For people practicing in other countries, trips to the sources of martial arts are the result of their interest in the cultural context of these martial arts.

Materials and Methods

The aims of this study are: 1) factography with the evaluation of the scientific event, 2) case study of an event significant for both the institutionalization of fighting arts research and martial arts tourism. The context of the global corona pandemic is an important element of description and interpretation here.

The methods used here are: expanded discourse analysis [Krippendorf 2004], visual anthropology [Grady 2008; Smith 2008; Pink 2021] (analysis of dozens of photos), participant observation or observant participation [Green *et al.* 2019] (ten years in IMACSSS activity, 2010-2020), and autoethnography [Marechal 2010; Bielecka-Prus 2014]. These are qualitative methods, in this case, complementary to each other. The analysis included, among others, several dozen photos and conference materials.

The comparison of scientific conferences was made here, following the example of a similar study [Cynarski, Swider 2017b]. The evaluations of previous conferences of this organization were taken into account (IMACSSS reports and subject literature).

Results

1. The Conference in Putrajaya 2020

Why was the Malaysian city of Putrajaya selected? It is the country's new administrative center, home to the Prime Minister. It is the third federal territory of Malaysia, next to Kuala Lumpur and Labuan. It has about 70 thousand residents. The federal government in the mid-1990s

bought approximately 46 square kilometers from the state of Selangor on which Putrajaya was built. It is now a beautiful city with the Putra Mosque (Malay – Prince), with modern stylized architecture. Remote participation forced an online tour of the city.



Photo 1. Reception desk. Protective measures are provided according to sanitary rules [courtesy of M.N.M. Shapie].

Due to the pandemic, the Congress called “2nd GSMACC & 9th IMACSSS International Conference” (where GSMACC stands for: Global Scientific Martial Arts and Cultural Conference) was held in a mixed or hybrid format from October 10-12, 2020 in Putrajaya. For Malaysian participants, it was direct participation, for foreign participants, remote participation. In fact, this remote participation and the figure of the “remote participant” are a novelty for reflection on science tourism or martial arts tourism [cf. Cynarski 2020b]. Circumstances forced something that had not been anticipated by theoretical considerations before. There was a form of participation and a participant category – remote [photos 2 and 3]. However, for the direct participants, all standard roles and relationships were retained. This applies to session leaders, performers, members of the organising committee, sponsors etc. [photos 1, 4-5].

On October 10, the Opening Ceremony in the Mesmera Hall took place at the guest hotel “The Everly”. Then the Seni Silat Championship and the first International Silat Tempur Invitational Championship began [cf. Shapie *et al.* 2019]. Three Malaysian scientists spoke at the first Plenary Session: Dr Mohad Anizu Mohd Nor, Dr Wirdati

Mohd Radzi and Dr Jazdy Zaidi Hassim. After lunch, an interesting paper presented Dr John A. Johnson. It was about World Taekwondo as combat sport and ITF *taekwon-do* is a martial art, in comparison. After that Mr Leonard Marynowski (*Signum Polonicum*, Poland) introduced the participants to the secrets of Polish sword art (hussar sabre).

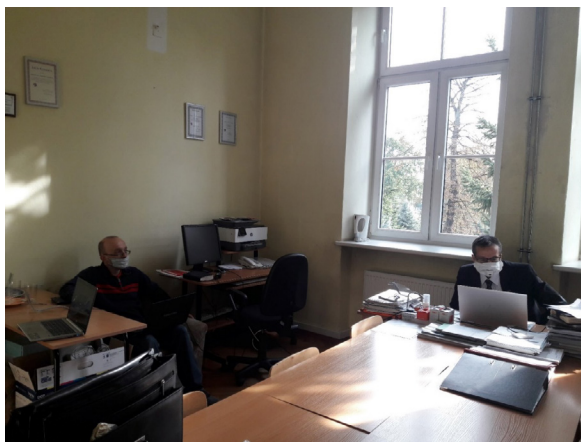


Photo 2. Online participation in the conference held at the headquarters of IPA and IMACSSS (Rzeszow, Poland, October 10th, 2020) [taken by the author].



Photo 3. To take part without leaving the place, part 2. From the left: Mr. Przemysław Pawelec, secretary general of IMACSSS, and Dr Paweł Swider, IMACSSS treasurer [taken by the author].

After the meeting of the Board of IMACSSS, the first virtual plenary session started. The first speaker was Prof. Wojciech J. Cynarski, president of IMACSSS. His keynote lecture was about attitude to tradition and formal exercises (*Fighting arts: between formality and spontaneity*). The second invited keynote speaker was Prof. Carlos Gutierrez-Garcia (University of Leon, Spain). His very interesting paper was on scienceometry in relation to periodicals and publications on combat sports and martial arts. In the evening there were *silat* competitions, 2nd Global Scientific Martial Arts and Cultural Congress and the *Silat* Symposium with Grand Master Aminuddin Anuar 10 dan, who also performed a show of *Seni silat*.

On the second day, there was a second plenary session, the continuation of the *silat* championship competition, subsequent sessions and the Gala of Martial Arts. The most interesting was the speech of the next keynote speaker, Prof. Abel A. de Figueiredo (Technical Institute in Viseu, Portugal). It was held as part of the 2nd Virtual Plenary Session. It was about treating training in area of combat sports and martial arts in a multidimensional way. This is generally in line with the postulates of the new scientific paradigm of system approaches.



Photo 4. A plenary session of the Conference in Putrajaya [courtesy of M.N.M. Shapie].



Photo 5. A group of VIPs. The first from left – Dr M.N.M. Shapie, main organizer [courtesy of M.N.M. Shapie].

The third day (12th October) began with the 3rd Live Plenary Session, preceding the sponsors' presentations, workshops [photo 6], the sixth oral presentation session, and the Closing Ceremony. One of the most interesting presentations of the day was the presentation by Dr Cristiano Bareira from Brazil on the phenomenology of martial arts. During the conclusion, it was announced that next year's IMACSSS conference is to be held in Chongqing (China) and in the year 2022 – in Rzeszow (Poland). The Chongqing offer was presented by Prof. Guodong Zhang, and the Rzeszow one – Mr. Przemyslaw Pawelec, general secretary of IMACSSS. A special plaque – certificate [photo 7] of thanks for organizing this conference will be presented by the president of IMACSSS to Dr Mohamed Nizam Shapy at the first opportunity [photo 8]. More about the conference, its organizers and participants – in the specially

published conference material, the so-called Abstract Book [Shapie *et al.* 2020].

The scientific level of the content presented was at least good. organizationally, we can speak of a success, despite the attendance being much lower than originally expected (for obvious reasons). From among the submitted applications, a total of 50 works were accepted, the abstracts of which were published in the Abstract Book [Shapie *et al.* 2020]. The pandemic situation, canceled flights, and the necessity of a two-week quarantine resulted in many teams from Europe (who had previously applied for participation) canceling their participation. So the participants from Malaysia dominated. The organizers also had to face the challenge of communicating with participants from different parts of the world and time zones (Europe, Brazil) by adjusting the time of “virtual” sessions.



Photo 6. Workshop of Silat during the 3rd day of the conference [courtesy of M.N.M. Shapie].

Table 1. Comparison of subsequent conferences of IMACSSS

Ordinal number	Where	Geographical factor	Year	Participants	Accepted papers
1	Rio Maior	Portugal, Europe	2016	121	68
2	Osaka	Japan, Asia	2017	c. 300	124
3	Rzeszow	Poland, Europe	2018	c. 200	49
4	Viseu	Portugal, Europe	2019	c. 50	26
5	Putrajaya	Malaysia, Asia	2020	c. 100	50

[source: own research]

This conference also served to promote Malaysian *silat*, as did the cyclical conference in Sankt Petersburg or championships in Serbian Novi Sad – for *sambo* [Cynarski 2018b; Matic *et al.* 2020]. Both martial arts aspire to the group of Olympic disciplines and require promotion on a global scale. This promotion is also fostered by the research work of one of the *silat* leaders [cf. Shapie *et al.* 2016; Shapie *et al.* 2019]. Three papers

were also devoted to the *Signum Polonicum* Polish historical fencing school.

How does this conference compare to the previous ones? The data in Table 1 are summarized according to their own direct observation.

Each of these conferences was a three-day event. The reviews stated that these were conferences of good or high scientific level [Cynarski, Kubala 2017; Cynarski 2018; Johnson 2018; Gutierrez-Garcia, Swider, Pawelec 2019; Pawelec, Yu, Cynarski 2020]. Only Viseu did not provide for workshops (practical exercises, gala, shows, or competitions), so the number of participants was smaller. Against this background, the Putrajaya conference, the only one conducted partially online, does not stand out in any significant way.

2. On institutional development of IMACSSS

Operating since 2010, IMACSSS has celebrated its 10th anniversary. In February 10 years ago there was a meeting of the initiative group. They were essentially IPA people and employees of the University of Rzeszow. Personally, the initiators of the establishment of the IMACSSS were Prof. Kazimierz Obodynski and Prof. Wojciech J. Cynarski. The authorities were elected at the Congress in Rzeszow in October 2010. Then, in the same year, the IMACSSS scientific society was registered with the court as an association. Subsequent IMACSSS congresses and conferences were held in Genoa (Italy) 2012, Tsukuba (Japan) 2013, Rzeszow (Poland), 2014, Brno (Czech Rep.) 2015, Rio Maior (Portugal) 2016, Osaka (Japan) 2017, again Rzeszow (Poland) 2018, Viseu (Portugal) 2019, and this year - Putrajaya (Malaysia). Moreover, twice Prof. Cynarski organized, as a member of the EASS board, special thematic sessions of the IMACSSS during the EASS (European Association for Sociology of Sport) conference – in Prague, Czech Republic (2017) and in Bordeaux, France (2018).

There are 10 thematic sections at IMACSSS: 1) Division of Bio-technical Approaches, 2) Division of History, 3) Division of Pedagogy, 4) Division of Philosophy, 5) Division of Science & Logic of Combat, 6) Division of Sociology & Anthropology, 7) Division of Kinesiology, 8) Division of Psychology, 9) Division of Coaching, 10) Division of Security and Self-Defence. Joint research projects of research teams associated with the IMACSSS are carried out. Due to the advanced process of institutionalization, IMACSSS is already a relatively stable brand among scientific organizations operating around various types of fighting arts. Since the Putrajaya conference was already promoted in Rzeszow (8th Conference) and very strongly in Viseu (9th Conference of IMACSSS) [Pawelec 2019; Pawelec, Yu, Cynarski 2020], it had to work to the advantage. In turn, the COVID 19 pandemic made it much more difficult for the organizers and interested parties to participate in this interesting

event (risk of infection, air traffic disruptions, required quarantine, etc.).

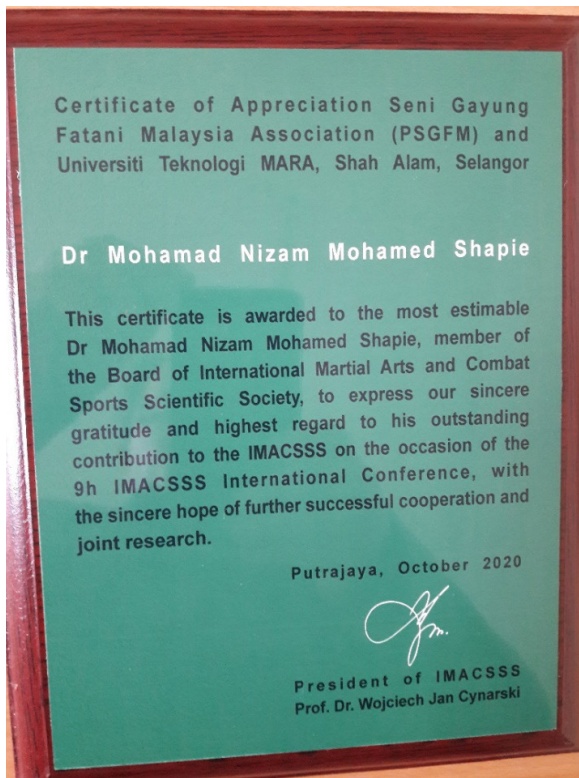


Photo 7. Certificate of Appreciation for the organizer of the conference in Putrajaya, funded by IMACSSS [taken by the author].



Photo 8. The President of IMACSSS appeared in Putrajaya only on the screen, on a remote connection [courtesy of M.N.M. Shapie].

Due to the direct absence, it was not possible to present the Gold Medals of Honor to people of particular merit for the IMACSSS, and which were agreed at the Viseu conference. Probably it will take place at the earliest opportunity [photo 8]. It has already been agreed that the next IMACSSS conference will be held in Chongqing (China) 2021, and at the meeting on October 10, 2020 in Putrajaya was decided that in 2022 it will take place again in Rzeszow (Poland).

One can venture to say that on the 10th anniversary of the scientific society discussed here, it reached the stage of institutional maturity, at which the pandemic did not postpone the annual conference. The conference was held on schedule, adapting to sanitary requirements and using technical possibilities for remote communication.

Discussion

As in a trip to Thailand, the motivation was combined with the need to see *Muai Thai* up close, and in the case of a trip to the largest *WingTsun kung-fu* center in Europe - this Chinese martial art [cf. Cynarski 2011, 2012], this is how a trip to Malaysia attracted as the capital of Malaysian *silat*. It is the Malaysian national martial art and at the same time a combat sport, which has already been demonstrated twice at the IMACSSS congresses in 2014 [Rut 2014] and 2018. What is also significant, the main organizer of the congress in Putrajaya - Dr M. N. M. Shapie - is also a high-ranking master (Grand Master, 9 dan) in *silat*. On the other hand, the organizers themselves combined the scientific goal with the promotion of *silat*.

It is incidentally a regularity that the Japanese have been promoting their martial arts for years, especially *judo* [Arima 1908]. *Judo* people from all over the world visit the Kodokan Institute several dozen times for various reasons (but also with some necessity). It is a promotion of *judo* and Japanese culture, not only physical. Similarly, the promotion of local martial arts in southern China's provinces translates into martial arts tourism [Guo 2019]. North Korea also competes for tourists by organizing the opportunity to study *taekwon-do* in this country [Cynarski, Johnson 2020; Johnson, Cynarski, Lee 2020]. Tourist destinations and sports centers are related to the economy and politics of a given country. This is confirmed by the meta-analytical studies of scientific publications on "martial arts tourism" [Pawelec, Swider, Cynarski 2020].

Under the patronage of IMACSSS, the quarterly "Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology", in which subsequent events important for the history and process of institutional development of researchers of fighting arts are described [Cynarski 2015c; Pawelec 2016; Sieber, Cynarski 2018; Sieber *et al.* 2019; Bartik *et al.* 2020]. In a separate thematic section

– the Martial Arts Tourism – we can find here separate reports from subsequent IMACSSS conferences. At the same time, they constitute the facts of the activity of this scientific society [cf. Slopecki, Obodynski 2011; Cynarski, Kubala 2013; Pawelec *et al.* 2015; Cynarski, Kubala 2017; Cynarski 2018a; Gutierrez-Garcia, Swider, Pawelec 2019; Pawelec, Yu, Cynarski 2020]. Of course, these are not the only publications in the thematic section mentioned here.

Slopecki [201] prepared documentation and reports from many methodological and training seminars from 1995-2011, covering clubs in central and northern Germany. He applied the methods of participant observation, text analysis and face-to-face interview, which was supplemented by a comparative analysis. The basis for his research were, in particular, messages about methodological and training seminars, diplomas issued by the organizers of seminars, which are pure “martial arts tourism”. It is a kind of cultural tourism. The main goal of the trip, which is participation in meetings aimed at professional development and exchange of knowledge, is combined with cultural and social goals – learning about history, cultural monuments and national traditions, and tasting the cuisine of a given country. However, in the case of remote participation, Malaysian cuisine that is exotic for a European could only be viewed on the slides promoting the Congress described above. There was also no opportunity to experience or observe whether the problems and barriers described by the researchers [cf. Dlużewska 2008, 2012] perform in the visited part of Malaysia. The only major obstacle to direct participation has been the coronavirus pandemic.

While in scientific events, the practice of martial arts (demonstrations, workshops) is only an addition, in other cases it is the other way round. EWTO (European WingTsun Organization) seminars, experts’ meetings in Munich and IPA General Assembly Commemoration Symposiums are very often oriented for the practical study [cf. Cynarski 2011; Cynarski, Sieber, Mytskan 2015; Kubala 2016; Cynarski 2019b]. The practical dimension, but with passive participation, concerns supporting at competitions or galas, but this type of participation is more often only (from the scientist’s perspective) an addition to a scientific conference [cf. Cynarski 2012, 2017, 2018b; Pawelec *et al.* 2015; Cynarski, Swider 2017]. Objectively, however, due to the number of fans who are not scientists, a large sports event, such as the World Cup, is the main event, and the conference is an accompanying one.

The participation of academic workers in martial arts tourism, which is their participation in scientific conferences, can be considered separately [Kosiewicz 2011; Swider 2017; Swider, Cynarski, Kubala 2018; Kubala, Cynarski, Swider 2019], field research [Cynarski, Swider 2017a; Slocum, Kline, Holden 2017; Cynarski 2019b] or any scientific activity [cf. Cynarski 2015b; Slocum,

Kline, Holden 2017]. These can be study trips, didactic exchanges, invitations of visiting professors, reviewers, etc. however, it is not true that only scientists take part in conferences such as those organized under the patronage of the IMACSSS. There are many leaders of various organizations, experts, enthusiasts, and students.

The online meeting with the Malaysian culture made it possible for a cultural dialogue to take place on the basis of joint martial arts studies. In a similar way, practicing traditional Japanese martial arts allows you to meet the culture of *bushi* warriors, also known as *samurai*. Elsewhere it is, for example, an encounter with the ethos of European knighthood, but not directly, in the practice of fighting in knightly armor, but in the area of axiology. In the *Idokan* organization, the canon of practice and its ideological foundation were humanized [Cynarski 2019c]. In turn, in many cases it is enriching to visit the Shaolin in Denfeng religious and sports center to see the place and context of the birth of many varieties of Chinese and, indirectly, other Asian martial arts [cf. Miller 2010; Cynarski, Swider 2017a; Skowron-Markowska 2019].

The novelty of this study is a description of the event organized for the first time in a hybrid manner. This is the effect of adapting to a new and difficult situation. The organizers on site and the management of the sponsoring organization met the challenge in an at least satisfactory manner. The limitation of this study is the case of one event and one international organization – a scientific society. In the case of other organizations and scientific or sports events, similar phenomena may occur in slightly different ways.

Conclusions

The hybrid or mixed conference was the first conference of this type combined with a sports event. This event was important for the community that has been operating within the IMACSSS for ten years. It is especially a success for the organizers. In the case of remote participation of foreign participants, it is difficult to determine their relationship to the conference venue, which is the seaside town of Putrajaya. It can be expected that conferences organized in remote and hybrid mode will be the dominant form (by necessity) for some time

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Wydarzenie naukowe i sztuk walki w nowej, pandemicznej sytuacji; casus jednej konferencji anno domini 2020

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka, sztuki walki, konferencja hybrydowa, faktografia wizualna, Putrajaya, IMACSSS

Streszczenie

Problem i cel. Problem naukowy jest tu tożsamy z celem poznawczym. Chodziło o: 1) faktografię wraz z oceną wydarzenia naukowego, 2) studium przypadku wydarzenia pod kątem instytucjonalizacji badań nad sztukami walki i turystyki sztuk walki. Metoda. Zastosowano metody jakościowe: rozszerzoną analizę dyskursu, antropologię wizualną, autoetnografię i obserwację uczestniczącą. Analiza obejmowała między innymi kilkadziesiąt zdjęć.

Wyniki. Konferencja IMACSSS została opisana i zrecenzowana jako wydarzenie naukowe zorganizowane w trybie hybrydowym, z udziałem bezpośrednim i zdalnym. Określono stan funkcjonowania organizacji naukowej dziesięć lat po jej utworzeniu. Konferencja mieszana lub hybrydowa była pierwszą tego typu konferencją połączoną z wydarzeniem sportowym. Wnioski. Było to ważne wydarzenie dla środowiska naukowego zajmującego się sztukami walki i sukces organizatorów. Można się spodziewać, że jeszcze przez jakiś czas konferencje zdalne i hybrydowe będą dominować.