

Living Martial Arts as a Product of Continuous Exchange of Knowledge



Vojtěch Šlapák¹

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to describe the mechanisms of the genesis and functioning of martial arts from the historical point of view, as a product of continuous exchange of knowledge, on both regional and international levels. The article responds to contemporary trends in the research of martial arts. It is not strictly focused on any geographical area or historical period; rather, it attempts to outline the general facts applicable to most combat systems of the world, by taking into account the similarities of various techniques. For this purpose, the focus of the author is mainly on modern Japanese martial arts. However, the article is also based on the traditions of European martial arts' masters, which are well known to us, as well as on the worldwide historical development of martial arts.

KEYWORDS

Aikido; combat; martial arts; Jigoro Kano; Fiore dei Liberi; Gichin Funakoshi; Johannes Liechtenauer; Judo; Karate-Do; Morihei Ueshiba; self-defence; Shioda Gozo

When Gichin Funakoshi (1868–1957)² changed the Japanese character of the word “kara” in order to shift its meaning from “Chinese” to “empty”³, there was more to it than just expressing the essence of Okinawan martial arts, where the “Chinese hand” was replaced by an empty, unarmed hand. Funakoshi was not paying tribute to the Japanese militarism of the time, nor was he denying the merits of the Chinese tradition. Instead, he probably meant to suggest that the new Karate-Do⁴ was mainly the result of the long-time work of local masters, a product that had originated in the ter-

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- 1 Vojtěch Šlapák, Institute of Global History, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Nám. Jana Palacha 2, 116 38, Praha 1, Czech Republic, Vojtech.slapak@seznam.cz
 - 2 Gichin Funakoshi systematised the teaching of Karate-Do, the style of *Shotokan*. A. P. MARTIN, *The Shotokan Karate Bible*, London 2016, pp. 12–14.
 - 3 D. CAVE, R. SACHS NORRIS, *Religion and the Body: Modern Science and the Construction of Religious Meaning*, Leiden 2012, p. 211.
 - 4 The original Okinawan combat systems adapted to contemporary needs. G. FUNAKOŠI, *Karate-Do: My Way of Life [Karatedó — Máživotnícesta]*, Praha 2010, p. 28



territory of the Japanese nation, designed for the Japanese nation.⁵ And he did it, even though he was well aware of the historical roots of his personal martial art.⁶ However,

5 This thought concept was not unique in its time. Morihei Ueshiba (1883–1969), founder of Aikido, was also a nationalist in many regards. However, both these masters wanted to spread their arts worldwide. VAILLANT, *Aikido*, Praha 1997, p. 74, cf. G. FUNAKOŠI, *Karate-Do [Karatedō]*, p. 75.

On the other hand, even in the second half of the 20th century, some teachers used to claim that, in order to understand Japanese martial arts, one needed to be Japanese. H.B. Wilder, *An old Rebel celebrates 20 years of Yoshinkan Aikido*, in: *Black Belt*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1976, p. 65.

6 Karate-Do was developed from Shorin-ryu and Shorei-ryu. FUNAKOŠI, pp. 28–29. According to Funakoshi both these arts were based on the martial arts of Nawate and Shurite, which were related to the Chinese styles of Wudang quan and Shaolin quan. *Ibid.*, p. 29. What is known as Wudang Fist and Shaolin Fist are not unified as martial arts, but are umbrella terms for a whole range of Chinese combat styles, collectively referred to as Wushu. The terms Wudang and Shaolin refer to the legendary origins of these styles in the Taoist monasteries in the Wudang Mountains and the Buddhist Shaolin Monastery near Mount Song. Sometimes all Chinese Wushu styles are divided into these two categories. However, many styles contain combat elements from both categories, which proves that this categorisation is very general and ambiguous. The Wudang quan are referred to as the internal styles, while the Shaolin quan are referred to as the external styles. J. BLUESTEIN, *Research of Martial Arts*, pp. 69–70. Sometimes, they are also divided into “hard” and “soft” styles. However, in practice, we often find internal principles in external arts and external elements in internal arts, that is to say, soft elements in hard styles and hard elements in soft styles. The same applied to the Okinawan combat styles that were mastered by Funakoshi’s masters, AnkoAsato (1827–1906) and AnkoItosu (1831–1915). M.D. BISHOP, *Okinawan Karate (Kobudo&Te) Teachers, Styles and Secret Techniques*. Morrisville 2018, pp. 183–187, 201. Both these men gained their skills from Matsumura Sokon (c.1800–1890), among others. Sokon “Bushi” (warrior) Matsumura had studied under Master Sakugawa (1733–1815) for five years and learnt the art of Wushu in China. In Karate-Do, the influence of Chinese martial arts is even greater. Kanga Sakugawa studied under Diplomat *Kusanku* (c.1670–after 1762), a Chinese master of Wushu. In honour of this master, one of the kata is called *Kusanku Kata*, which is practised in many styles of Karate-Do. The Korean martial art, Tang Soo Do, also uses this kata. B. D. CLAYTON, *Shotokan’s Secret: The Hidden Truth Behind Karate’s Fighting Origins*. Chicago 2004. pp. 36–41.

Jane Hallander emphasises its Chinese elements and considers it as one of the most difficult kata and a direct proof of the close relationship between Karate-Do and the Chinese Wushu. J. Hallander, *KUSANKU, Shorin-Ryu Karate’s Kung Fu Form*, in: *Black Belt*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 1990, pp. 58–61

Sakugawa’s second teacher was Takahra (1683–1760), a monk from the Ryukyu Islands, who drew on the knowledge of Master Yara (1668–1756). At the age of 12, Master Chatan Yara was sent to China to study the Chinese language and martial arts. He returned to Okinawa after 20 years. Thereafter, he started to teach martial arts there. Regarding Yara’s style of Wushu, it was probably Xing Yi which he mastered under the guidance of Wong Chung-Yoh (17th century) from Fuzhou. However, at this level, the information is very unreliable and ambiguous.

In any case, Karate-Do was developed in the Okinawan environment, but its roots are demonstrably Chinese. At the same time, it was constantly influenced by Chinese styles throughout its development.

this shift in meaning, together with the further development of modern martial arts, changed the view on “national” arts in general.

However, what is the essence of a “national” martial art? What is its visual appearance? Does it remain completely original and authentic for many years? Is it a treasure, carefully guarded against foreign influences? A secret teaching, not leaving the boundaries of its territory? What is the role of the international exchange of knowledge? Is it of any importance that martial arts compete with each other to prove which one is superior? Are today’s hybrid martial arts a relatively new⁷ concept? To answer these questions, we take an imaginary journey to the creation and development of an ideal fighting style.

Combat system is born from a primitive, brutal method of fighting, as a result of the effect of a whole range of factors. The social environment plays a role here. It is fundamentally influenced by the weapons of the time, and, in the details, also by natural conditions. Its final form is often difficult to understand with hindsight. Nevertheless, in its time and domestic environment, it represents the best possible result of the desire to survive and bring destruction to the enemy.⁸

The paths along which these long-forgotten styles evolved are impossible to trace today. We are thus forced to be content with only fragmentary knowledge about them. In order to better understand the mechanisms of the origin, development and extinction of martial arts, it is good to study a whole number of living and extinct styles.⁹

7 Bartitsu is considered the first hybrid martial art (i.e. a combination of several different martial arts). Bruce Lee, founder of JeetKune Do, is sometimes considered the father of MMA. T. A. GREEN — J. R. SVINTH, *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia of History and Innovation*, Santa Barbara 2010, pp. 451–454.

8 Except for the styles that voluntarily surrender any wish to completely destroy the opponent and have a different attitude to fighting. This group includes, for example, the Japanese Budo, which seeks physical and mental perfection, as well as modern combat sports which, despite their controversial nature, are governed by strict rules that protect the health of the participants. D. MARQUIS, *The Art of Strategy*, Bloomington 2012. p. 70 cf. S. LOLAND, *Fair Play in Sport: A Moral Norm System*, London 2013, pp. 76–77.

9 Given the level of generalisation, the author of this article is well aware that general conclusions derived from this work may not correspond to all styles and certainly not to the views of all practitioners of martial arts on a given subject. Traditionally, they have had disagreements among themselves in all areas and times. T. Allen, *The Dark Side of The Martial Arts*, in: *Black Belt*, Vol. 34, No. 10, 1996, pp. 92–96 and 132.

The author is of the opinion that, for at least a partial understanding of the mechanisms of martial arts, it is necessary to practise them and to try fighting with and without weapons, including all combat categories involving long-, medium-, short-distance and close combat. Modern martial arts and sports are usually unilaterally focused on a particular preferred area, while other areas are paid only marginal attention. This is due to the preferences of their founders or the transformation of the sport that has resulted in the banning of dangerous techniques, in order to protect the health of the sportsmen and preserve the required principles. Alternatively, there is a different reason for choosing a specific area. For example, Morihei Ueshiba created his Aikido primarily from techniques for disarming and destabilising the opponent and his subsequent throwing to the ground and immobilisation. From a technical point of view, all martial arts consist of these combat skills — we can find them, for example, in medieval Ringen, Jiu-Jitsu, Karate-Do and most of the



Each style goes through certain phases of development from its birth, to its expansion, degeneration¹⁰ and collapse¹¹. Alternatively, it remains in a phase of hibernation under certain conditions.¹²

Wushu styles, where these skills are called *qinna*. D. F. DRAEGER, R. W. SMITH, *Comprehensive Asian Fighting Arts*, Tokyo 1980, p. 50.

For religious and philosophical reasons, Morihei Ueshiba preferred these combat elements to close body combat or fist fighting, despite he himself having mastered all these combat techniques, which was nothing unusual for masters of martial arts of his time. J. STEVENS, *Abundant Peace: The Biography of Morihei Ueshiba*, Boston 1987. pp. 67–68.

Gichin Funakoshi, master of Karate-Do, was also trained in wrestling. FUNAKOŠI, pp. 73–74.

For a change, Jigoro Kano, master of Judo, practised and trained others in *ate mi-waza* techniques and their historical use is preserved in Judo in the form of the self-defence *Kime-no-kata*, which he created in cooperation with a Jiu-Jitsu masters' committee. Moreover, Kano took private lessons from Funakoshi. *Goshin Jutsu*, another kata containing *ate mi*, was not added to the Kodokan curriculum until the 1950s. J. STEVENS, *The Way of Judo: Portrait of Jigoro Kano and His students*, Boston 2013. p. 9. cf. FUNAKOŠI, p. 45. cf. B. N. WATSON, *Judo Memoirs of Jigoro Kano*, Bloomington 2008. pp. 79–80.

10 Judo has increasingly been circumscribed by various rules into a pure sport form. One of the last adjustments forbade the legs to be grasped with the hands, making it impossible to perform *kata guruma* in the form that Jigoro Kano adopted from the Western wrestling style, because he found it suitable for destroying taller and stronger opponents. N. OHLENKAMP, *Black Belt Judo*, 2006, p. 74.

11 These are the combat styles that have served as transient forms and are now falling into decline due to the loss of popularity and practitioners. They include, for example, different kinds of Kickboxing and Boxing itself, which are pushed into the background by the increasingly popular MMA. T. MADIGAN, T. DELANEY, *Sports: Why People Love Them!*, Lanham 2009, pp. 47–48.

In the past, the same scenario took place in the combat styles that used only one weapon, resulting in their gradual stagnation to make space for a new school. Just like the school of the sword and buckler gave way to the long sword during the time of Hans Talhoffer, or later the long sword gave way to the rapier during the time of Joachim Mayer. K. ČERNÍN, *The Forgotten Art of Walpurgis [Zapomenuté umění Walpurgis]*, in: A. KOHUTOVIČ (ed.) *Tyrnhaw* 2012. Trnava 2013, p. 31.

12 One such example is Aikido, which does not respond to current trends, but maintains the methodology of self-defence techniques typical of feudal Japan. It mostly focuses on grips that can be used to defend against weapon attacks or to prevent the opponent from drawing his weapon. Today, the most common attack in street fights — strong blows to the head and upper and mid-trunk — which are based on modern Boxing with gloves (jab, cross and hook), are not taken into account in the basic principles of Aikido. See, for example, B. RÖDEL, *Aikido Grundlagen: Technik — Prinzipien — Konzeption*, Aachen 2016, pp. 76, 82, 104. Practitioners of traditional Karate-Do have to deal with a similar problem. They often do not know the combat application of various forms of *kata* and their practice thus becomes mere fitness training. Teachers who focus on real fighting often do not teach these *katas*. S. BRITT, *Kata Application Notebooks: Isshinryu Karate: The Journal for Recording Kata Applications and Bunkai*, USA 2013. s. 5.

These martial arts are thus still preserved, but if they are not regularly restored, they will gradually be fragmented and cease to exist.



The European environment provides inspiration mainly from its far distant past. Today, the increasingly popular revival of extinct European martial arts, together with the ever-deepening studies of the sources, constantly bring about new insights into previously incorrectly answered questions. One of the great topics of debate is the existence of “national schools”. This is partially a construct of older historiography, as well as the common practice of viewing martial arts. Regarding the sources, mainly the German Fechtbuchers of the 14th–17th centuries can help us to understand the European environment.

It may appear to us at first sight that the Asian region is more familiar and explored. However, it is surprising how many clichés, myths and even deliberate fabrications prevail about this region.¹³ Moreover, the history of the styles that still operate to this day is usually a matter of the past 300 years.¹⁴ Little is known about earlier times.¹⁵ For this reason, it is important to monitor the development of modern, contemporary martial arts and sports that are rapidly being transformed according to changing rules right in front of our eyes, to identify the short-term reasons for these changes, or at least the symptoms of the ever-reforming styles.

In earlier works that focused mainly on European Fencing, we find terms such as “German, Italian, French or Spanish School”. Different forms of folk or professional wrestling are often called “Cornwall, Breton or Graeco-Roman style”. Alternatively, we are confronted with Swiss Schwingen and the old Nordic Glima. Modern martial arts and self-defence systems are often viewed through national lenses. For this reason, we know French Savate, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu¹⁶, Israeli Krav Maga¹⁷, Russian Systema, German Allkampf-Jitsu, etc. With regard to the Asian region, we think in the same way about

13 Here the article is based on some works of modern historiography that successfully demythologizes the world of ancient Asian masters.

Donn F. Draeger and Robert W. Smith are perhaps one of the first Western writers in this field to have examined the question of Asian martial arts with critical eyes, while also intentionally studying them in a practical way.

14 Some masters and authors tend to claim that their martial art is 1000 years old, although the majority of living martial arts underwent a transformation during even much shorter periods of time. K. GIL, K. CHUL-HWAN, *Taekwondo perfekt 1*, Niedernhausen 1999, p. 7.

15 There are even fewer combat system books covering earlier periods in China and Japan than in Europe. The first preserved Chinese manual dates back to the 16th century. Otherwise, Asian and European manuals are quite similar regarding both formality and content. See S. Wetzler, “Your Kung Fu is very good, Master Fiore!” *Asian and European fight books in comparison*, in: *Acta Periodica Duellatorum*, Vol. 4/2, 2016, pp. 52, 55.

Jack Chen from the Historical Combat Association in Singapore specialises in the reconstruction of these styles and the translation of Chinese manuals into English. See J. CHEN, *Ancient Art of Chinese Long Straight Sword*, Singapore 2018.

16 This word combination — Brazilian and Jiu-Jitsu — already shows the Brazilian philosophy towards martial arts and sports, which instructs them to practise various styles and combine their advantages, while not focusing on one style only. In this way, they are able to face different opponents. G. ROZA, *Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu*, New York 2012, p. 6.

17 KravMaga is also a mixture of many styles, namely the techniques and principles of Boxing, Karate-Do, Aikido, Wrestling and Judo. This system’s philosophy is openness to foreign influences and ideas. I. SDE-OR(LICHTENFELD), E. Yanilov, *KravMaga*, Praha 2003, p. 3.



Japanese Aikido, Judo, Jiu-Jitsu, Karate-Do, Kyudo, Kobudo, Philippine Arnis, Eskrima or Kali, Thai and Burmese Boxing, and the Chinese Wushu styles, such as Wing Chun, Tai Chi, Hung Ga, Xin Yi, Pa Kua, Shaolin Quan and others.¹⁸ This article will not question these classifications, as the author does not consider it necessary to break down this clearly arranged structure or to deny individual regions their intellectual property rights. Rather, it attempts to explain the patterns of the evolution of martial arts, styles and systems that may offer the reader a new perspective on the whole issue.

Asian martial arts¹⁹ are often perceived as an inseparable part of the culture and a legacy of the ancestors that is often associated with some other religious tradition.²⁰ In Europe, on the contrary, the old warrior tradition is dead and its revival is taking place in a quantitative and very dynamic way. However, it is only the large associations of international renown and lifelong professional and semi-professional researchers who present their knowledge and portrayals of extinct martial arts. Naturally, such a heterogeneous and global society has the potential of being in immense chaos. There are often disputes over what is a truly relevant presentation of a historical martial art and what is already too liberal an interpretation, and who is a genuine authority in the field. However, for the purposes of this article, these controversies are not essential. On the contrary, it is necessary to understand them as a certain “quality” which has accompanied European and Asian martial arts throughout their existence.²¹

18 Chinese Wushu consists of probably 400 styles. D. F. DRAEGER, R. W. SMITH. pp. 11–12.

19 Nowadays, the area of Asian martial arts is very beneficial for researches that focus on extinct martial arts, primarily because some of these styles have survived from ancient times and even today are sometimes practised in their original or slightly changed form. However, it is necessary to be cautious while studying these styles and especially to work carefully with the founding myth, which is often supported only by oral evidence. In the worst case scenario, it has been artificially invented for marketing purposes. B. N. JUDKINS, J. NIELSONS, *The Creation of Wing Chun: A Social History of the Southern Chinese Martial Arts*, New York 2015. pp. 7–8.

The end of the Ming Dynasty and the early period of the Qing Dynasty are the periods that provide researchers with information on the historical roots of martial arts, concentrating specifically on fighting with bare hands. M. SHAHAR, *The Shaolin Monastery: History, Religion, and the Chinese Martial Arts*, Honolulu 2008. p. 3.

Practically, at the same time, the English “fisticuffs” (Bare-knuckle Boxing) was born that, being governed by sporting rules, gradually developed into the form of modern Boxing with gloves. A. CHILL, *Bare-Knuckle Britons and Fighting Irish: Boxing, Race, Religion and Nationality in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, McFarland 2017. p. 9.

It is no wonder that the development of martial arts without weapons occurred just then. These styles could not change the course of wars, but they could help people to gain self-esteem and feel satisfaction while successfully defeating their enemies in combat arenas. M. SHAHAR, p. 5. cf. A. CHILL, p. 9.

20 This view was common in medieval and Renaissance Europe, too, but vanished along with the old styles. V. ŠLAPÁK, *The Medieval Warrior in Combat — Modern Myth and Historical Reality [Středověký válečník v boji. Modernímýtus a historická realita]*, Master’s thesis defended at Charles University, Prague 2016, p. 61.

21 This endless rivalry has been captured in Fechtbuchers as well as in the memoirs of modern masters. See, for example: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Roma, Italia. Cod. 44.A.8. fol. 3 r. cf. H.B. Wilder, p. 62.

A NOTE ON THE TERMS SYSTEM, ART AND STYLE

This terminology is used throughout the article and will now be explained for better clarity. A *combat system* is meant here as a comprehensive set of tactical and technical ideas, operating with particular weapons and designed for a specific area of combat, i.e. warfare, self-defence situations or duels. It can be applied in all these areas or be strictly intended for just one area.

A *martial art* is an umbrella term for a combat system or several combat systems, enriched by a philosophical or religious dimension. The goal is preservation of combat tradition and self-cultivation. A martial art usually includes a combat system, but a combat system itself is not martial art. The boundaries between an art and a system can be blurred and probably depend mainly on the interpretation of the researcher. It is, of course, questionable whether we can use the same term for a school in a medieval manuscript, which deals with philosophy in a single page, and a martial art which is supported by the scripts of several philosophers and mystics, but which loses its combat essence by moving into the area of relaxation and healthcare. The author of this article is inclined to believe that we can, because it is always necessary to look at the whole issue through the lens of contemporary knowledge and mainly to compare systems at a similar level of development.²²

A *style* is applicable as a synonym of both categories. It can be seen within combat systems, martial arts as well as in martial sport. It also usually means a product of a single master kept alive by his followers. It can be interchanged with a combat school. Again, it is very difficult to make a classification. Moreover, what we often understand as a single complex is in fact a whole range of arts and schools.²³

We will now create a construct of an ideal martial art in terms of its dialectical development. In this way, it will be possible to outline the very problematic nature of

22 If we took Liechtenauer's school as an example of the first art and Tai Chi Chuan as an example of the second art, we would have to add the whole idea of the Christian knight to Liechtenauer's brief introduction. See: J. FLORI, *Chevaliers erchevalerie au Moyen age*, Paris 2012.

In the case of Tai Chi, it is necessary to consider mainly its historical use in combat, which is today rather rare. It is possible that this view of Tai Chi will soon change. Chinese billionaire Jack Ma and Wushu star Li Lianjie are striving to introduce Tai Chi as an Olympic wrestling discipline. Thus, in the near future, this art could be systematised and professionalised — just like Judo once was. Author's note.

23 Karate-Do can be perceived as a martial art with a variety of styles of different followers. J. Sells, *Shito-ryu*, in: *Black Belt*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1990, p. 30.

On the other hand, Aikido is in fact the style of a single man, broken down into the sub-styles of his disciples and followers. However, given its worldwide significance, it undoubtedly deserves the status of an art. H.B. Wilder, p. 62.

The term Jiu-Jitsu is almost as wide as the term Wushu. It consists of ancient historical styles, the Brazilian derivative of Judo or different Japanese self-defence clubs. J. MOCLAIR, *Ju-jutsu*, 2009, pp. 2–11.

By contrast, Korean Taekwondo has a completely systematised way of teaching. This is certainly because it is an Olympic sport. U. MOENIG, *Taekwondo: From a Martial Art to a Martial Sport*, London 2015, p. 54.



the creation of such an unstable, difficult-to-grasp and constantly changing formation. The entire curriculum of martial arts includes the knowledge of basic movement elements, the practical application of theoretical tactical concepts and the philosophical-religious overlap of the whole system, which is promoted with different intensity in different styles.²⁴

DIALECTICS OF MARTIAL ARTS

The first initiator of each and every martial school is its *Founder*. Often, he is unknown, legendary²⁵ or even purposefully invented.²⁶ However, what is important is that while the existence of the *Founder* is debatable, his being is real, although his true identity may be obscured. It is certain that every comprehensive system has its creator or at least a reformer. However, it is sometimes impossible to trace the founder and his style, as the traces were lost or distorted by other *Continuators* and their interventions in a given system.²⁷ The *Continuator* is often believed to be the founder, despite the fact that he did not enrich the existing system in any way, but only popularised it for future generations or introduced a unified and clear methodology.²⁸

If we think of a genuine *Founder*, we think of a person who laid down the basic principles of the system and whose work was further developed by others.²⁹ Most

²⁴ The philosophical-religious overlap can be adopted from contemporary religious practice, or it can be completely original and associated with a particular style, or it can later be programmatically connected to the system with the whole mythology. M. SHAHAR, pp. 3–4.

²⁵ Just like Theseus and Heracles were believed to be the inventors of Pankration. I. MORELLO, *The Origins of Martial Arts: Pankration*, Morrisville, 2012, p. 9.

²⁶ For example, the shadow of doubts falls on legendary founder Yim Wing Chun and her teacher Ng Mui. Their existence cannot be evidenced, although this founding myth dates back to the early 18th century. B. N. JUDKINS, J. NIELSONS, *The Creation of Wing Chun* pp. 8–9. However, a whole number of Asian masters are controversial figures.

²⁷ Such as Liechtenauer's continuators and their students of the next generation, influenced by their master with different intensity. D. JAQUET, K. VERELST, T. DAWSON, *Late Medieval and Early Modern Fight Books: Transmission and Tradition of Martial Arts in Europe (14th–17th Centuries)*, Leiden 2016, p. 254.

²⁸ Founders of today's known martial arts were in fact *Continuators*. However, this designation by no means diminishes their undisputable contribution to the style and takes into account the struggles they went through while carrying out their heuristic studies and educating themselves. A real *Founder* represents only the first link in the chain and is usually lost in ancient times. For example, Hang Tuah (15th century), the half-mythical "father" of Silat Melayu, is also only an art mediator, as this style was probably created many centuries before he was born. S. SHAMSUDDIN, *The Malay Art of Self-Defense: Silat Seni Gayong*, Berkeley 2005, p. 195.

²⁹ Even in the case of modern styles of "a single man", such as Aikido (Ueshiba), Judo (Kano), Jeet Kune Do (Lee), Krav Maga (Lichtenfeld), etc., we should not think of their creators as *Founders*, because they merely compiled or categorised the knowledge of their predecessors.

Morihei Ueshiba, who is considered a great reformer and thinker by the Japanese, remains a question. He created Aikido, based on his lifelong experience with different martial arts.

likely, it is an individual who has dedicated most of his life to exercise and to practising martial arts.³⁰ However, if we assume that roots of martial arts reach back to the dawn of human civilisation,³¹ we can suppose that there was also an ancient *Forefather* of the style. He was the first person to start passing on his vast experience to other warriors. Alternatively, he started to think of combat in a systematic way, as a confrontation of certain physical forces borne by conflicting parties within the strict



It belongs to the group of inner martial arts with its attitude to combat and is quite unique regarding its philosophical dimension related to the way it treats the enemy. It focuses on peaceful and harmless resolutions to conflict situations, which is typical of other styles as well. It may appear absurd at first sight, as it tries merely to immobilise the enemy without physically harming him.

However, from a technical point of view, it is disputable whether Aikido is a completely original martial art. The historical roots of Aikido are difficult to find. A whole range of martial arts is associated with Master Ueshiba. At a young age, he practised Sumo wrestling, excelled at Jukenjutsu (bayonet combat) and practised Jujutsu at several schools. Above all, he was allegedly mostly influenced by the style of Daito-ryu Aiki-jujutsu, which he practised under the famous Master Sokaku Takeda (1859–1943). This school dates back to the 11th century, but, in fact, there are only reports of oral evidence. W. G. VON KRENNER — D. APODACA — K. JEREMIAH, *Aikido Ground Fighting: Grappling and Submission Techniques*, Berkeley 2013, p. 7.

In addition, foreign historians have certain doubts about Aikido. Draeger and Smith reported that Morihei Ueshiba, “the unbeatable warrior”, visited China several times and practised Wushu there. However, in his official biography, there is no mention of his practising Chinese martial arts. D. F. DRAEGER, R. W. SMITH, p. 139. cf. K. UESHIBA — M. UESHIBA, *A life in Aikido: The Biography of Founder Morihei Ueshiba*, New York 2015.

Stanley Pranin, world-famous Aikido researcher, strongly protests against the Chinese influence. P. STANLEY, *The Elusive Chinese Influence on Aikido*, aikidojournal.com [online]. © 2012 [cit. 2018-5-11] Available at: <https://aikidojournal.com/2012/09/18/the-elusive-chinese-influence-on-aikido-by-stanley-pranin-3/>

The author of this article heard stories from a few Wushu practitioners that were handed down to them from their Chinese teachers, who had allegedly trained with Ueshiba. However, these oral reports are impossible to verify and, considering how mythicized the area of Asian martial arts is, it is impossible to satisfactorily resolve the question of the Chinese influence on Aikido.

In any case, Aikido shows technical similarities with the most famous styles of Wudang Quan — Tai Chi and Pa kua.

It is thus ambiguous whether we can consider Ueshiba a *Reformer* or the true *Founder*. At the same time, this problem is a good illustration of how difficult it is to discover the historical roots of individual martial arts and styles.

30 Such masters include, for example, Fiore and Liechtenauer in Europe (14th century), legendary Zhang Sanfeng in China (12th or 13th century) and Ueshiba in Japan (early 20th century). K. K. WONG, *The Complete Book of Tai Chi Chuan*, Sungai Petani 2016, p. 19

31 They certainly date back to these times, but it is impossible to find evidence for their direct continuity. Sumerian martial arts may be similar to those of Babylon and Ancient Greece. However, given the huge time span, we can assume that there are dozens of extinct styles that may have replaced one another and complemented or contradicted each other in their conceptions. T. A. GREEN, *Martial Arts of the World: R-Z*, Santa Barbara 2001, pp. 712–714.



framework of their biomechanical possibilities. On the basis of individual factors, he started to create a *Combat Science*.³²

In the case of the *Founder*, he was usually a soldier or another armed man. However, a functional combat system could also be created by a civilian with sufficient combat experience.³³ Nevertheless, it was always an individual with an extraordinary talent for theoretical and abstract thinking, practical knowledge of physical laws and anatomy, and with the extraordinary psychological resilience necessary to carry out pragmatic technical actions in a moment of extreme danger. These skills were, of course, not gained through organised studies³⁴, at least not at the outset, but through direct combat experience. Psychological resilience could thus either be an innate quality³⁵ or later be purposefully practised.

Apart from the mythical brilliance of some of the *Founders*³⁶, it is important to realise that their work was not born out of the vacuum of combat knowledge, but was always the culmination of the education by many groups and individuals, with continuity reaching back to the many centuries-old traditions of earlier combat systems.³⁷

32 Both ancient and modern creators in Asia and Europe think of their combat systems as an *Art* or *Science*. For example, the Master of Manuscript I.33 (1300), Fabian von Auerswald (1539), Gichin Fukanoshi (1956), Morihei Ueshiba and others. Royal Armouries Leeds, United Kingdom, MS I.33.fol 1 r. cf. Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, German, 2°Col.MS.Philos.62 cf. G. FUNAKOŠI, p. 11. cf. M. UESHIBA, *The Art of Peace*, transl. John Stevens, London 1992, p. 11.

33 Especially if it was a sporting activity, as in the case of Joachim Meyer's fencing, or street fighting and wrestling in the system of Nicolaes Petter. In these cases, there was no need to have direct war experience. For more information see: BLANES, *Nicolaes Petter, the Biography*, Morrisville 2014. A. KIERMAYER, *Joachim Meyers Kunst Des Fechtens. Gründtliche Beschreibung des Fechtens, 1570*, Salzhemmendorf, 2012.

34 Although even warriors were sometimes intellectuals and scientists, like Wong Fei Hong, the famous Master of the Hung Gar style, who was also a physician, and Professor Jigoro Kano, the founder of Judo. S. VERSTAPPENS, *A Masters Guide to The Way of the Warrior*, Morrisville 2016, p. 21. cf. R. Wells, *The Grand Old Man of Judo*, in: *Black Belt*, Vol. 2, No. 5, 1964, p. 15.

35 From a psychiatric point of view, such a person could be a psychopath, which is meant here without the negative connotation which often arises in the reader's mind. P. JERICÓ, *No Fear: In Business and In Life*, London p. 107.

36 John Stevens, a great promoter of Aikido, sometimes calls Morihei Ueshiba, quite uncritically, the greatest martial artist of all times. M. UESHIBA, *The Art of Peace*, p. 5.

37 Every system culminated after a certain period of development, which could perhaps last for decades and more. It is so in the case of the school of the sword and buckler, which reached its technical peak at the time of Manuscript I.33., i.e. after several centuries' use of this combination of weapons. Or Karate-Do, which was simplified by Fukanoshi a century after the death of Kanga Sakugawa (1733-1815), the alleged father of this art. P. MCCARTHY, *Bubishi*, p. 152.

However, here we need to be aware of not making a distinction between an art, which is worked on very hard to achieve technical perfection, e.g. Judo, and a decentralised system, which disintegrates and integrates in its natural environment according to the personages currently leading the particular styles. This was probably the case in Okinawa at the time of Fukanoshi's teachers. G. FUNAKOŠI, *Karatedó*, p. 29. Therefore, the shorter the development, the more is the styles pushed towards unification, or to the creation of a new style that aspires to a hegemonic position.



Motivation for the birth of a new system has always been ensured by the changes of varying intensity in human society. This may include, for example, a new military weapon, an intervention by the legislative power,³⁸ and also a new trend in fashion³⁹. Unless the government in office at the time was linked to a certain restriction on the use of weapons, the persecution of an undesirable social class,⁴⁰ prohibition of martial activities being practised due to being regarded as a practice by a forbidden cult⁴¹ or as the source of frequent disturbances and excessive self-confidence,⁴² martial styles were usually largely unaffected by the cessation of states, coups or border transformations. When creating a new system, the *Founder* pragmatically based it on the market situation of martial styles⁴³ and on the need to reform the combat principles which no longer benefited from the reality of battlefields and classic violent incidents outside them.⁴⁴The creator of the new system thus analysed the old systems, if necessary, and got rid of what he considered as non-functional and outdated and included in the curriculum what he considered to be the core of the system.⁴⁵ It could have happened, of course, that all the principles were deliberately rejected and the

38 For example, a ban on carrying weapons, which may be the reason for the over-dimensioning of combat styles using bare hands or for the creation of combat systems such as *Okinawan Kobudo* — a system using agricultural tools and improvised weapons. T. A. GREEN, *Martial Arts of the World: A-Q*, Santa Barbara 2001, pp. 286–291.

39 This is how *canne de combat* was introduced into *French Savate* — a combat system originally using a walking stick. T. A. GREEN, *Martial Arts of the World: R-Z*, p. 520.

40 In China, the Communist Party attempted to control Wushu. However, the position of individual styles was different. For example, Choy Li Fut was the style of the working class, while Wing Chun was perceived as a tool of the middle class. B. N. JUDKINS, J. NIELSONS, *The Creation of Wing Chun*, p. 6.

41 The prohibition of the Olympic Games by Theodosius is traditionally dated back to 393. S. REMIJSSEN, *The End of Greek Athletics in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2015. p. 47.

42 The prohibition of Karate-Do in the Meiji Period. At first, Karate-Do went underground and, as Fukanoshi states, it gradually became more public again. G. FUNAKOŠI, p. 16. After WWII, all other martial arts were prohibited in Japan for a short period of time. A. Adams, *Status report: The “other” Aikido*, in: *Black Belt*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1974, p. 35.

43 Nicolaes Petter (1624–1672) in his work purposely responds to the usual brawling attacks of the time. N. PETTER, *Self defense Martial Art*, Morrisville 2011, p. 16.

44 All these areas of combat encounters have always been in synergy. The techniques used for war purposes found their specific use in self-defence and the sporting areas, although they may have grown significantly apart during certain eras and due to specialisations of different intensity. Today, we can observe this in the example of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, which was created as an offshoot of Kodokan Judo and which is, with its focus on ground fighting, perfect for sporting purposes and for a one-on-one unarmed combat. However, ground fighting is rather unsuitable when fighting against a group. As for military use, such an art is also very difficult to use, given the size of a soldier's field equipment. T. A. GREEN, *Martial Arts of the World: A-Q*, p. 52.

The techniques of the Yoshinkan Aikido style found its use in the Tokyo police, but are mostly considered too complicated for self-defence use. S. GOZO — Y. GOZO, *Total aikido: The Master Course*, Tokyo 1996, s. 11.

45 Imi Lichtenfeld, although a boxing and wrestling champion, based his Krav Maga on the principles of other combat systems that were suitable for the reality of street brawls and



Founder was considered the actual creator of the new martial style. However, in fact, he never based it solely on his own experience.

A style became successful provided that the *Founder* was successful. In most cases, he was an extraordinary warrior, or at least a competent instructor who trained a whole number of successful practitioners. In times of peace or during periods when it was not customary to defend one's skills by risking one's life, he could also be a great businessman, capable of popularising his skills.⁴⁶ However, in most cases, he was a mythicized duellist and a warrior, around whom fanciful stories already gathered during his lifetime.⁴⁷

Combat systems thus percolated through to the public's consciousness and attracted a number of people hoping to become as successful as the *Founder*. Both professional warriors and civilians became practitioners, people travelling far from their homes as well as local inhabitants. The *Founder* trained both complete beginners and advanced candidates in combat science, who used his teaching together with their own experience, thus creating their own hybrid styles.⁴⁸

The *Founder* was at the top of his career and the style created by him was blooming. However, when the young martial style was taken over by the *Continuators*, the *Founder's* legacy was in great danger. The *Continuators* did not necessarily achieve the combat and pedagogical qualities of the *Founder*. In such cases, the art fell into decadence, ceased to focus on topical pragmatic actions of the time and its followers were not able to orientate themselves on the market of martial styles. The style was very quickly overtaken by others and, if the next generation did not regain the lost fame,⁴⁹ it went through fragmentation. Then the style was either partially transferred

armed assaults. A. BYERS, *KravMaga and Self-Defense: The Fighting Techniques of the Israeli Defense Forces*, New York, 2013. p. 8.

⁴⁶ Both today and in the past, there are or have been many fraudsters, who claim that their style is something other than what it really is. Alternatively, there are inadequately trained warriors who claim to be masters. The authors of European Fechtbüchern as well as masters of modern martial arts warn about these. G. FUNAKOŠI, pp. 14–15. cf. H.B. Wilder, pp. 62–63. However, it is necessary to understand that the opinion of the top people in the field is that the vast majority of masters are not sufficiently qualified.

⁴⁷ Today, extraordinary warriors lack this mythicality and are at a great disadvantage, because their style is usually documented. Okinawam Master Anko Azato (1827–1906) claimed that knowing the enemy is half the battle. G. FUNAKOŠI, p. 17.

⁴⁸ This is how Kenji Tomiki (1900–1979) created his own style known as Shodokan Aikido, based on his study of Judo at Gigoro Kano and Aikido at Morihei Ueshiba. *Tomikiryu Aikido*, in: Black Belt, Vol. 19, No. 10, 1981, pp. 48–52 and 94.

Choi Yong-Sool (1904–1986) laid the foundations for Korean Hapkido after he finished practising Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu at Takeda Sokaku (1859–1943). Hapkido is thus characterised by hand techniques, similar to the techniques of Aikido and Aikijujutsu, and by high kicks that are popular in another Korean martial art — Taekwondo. *Hapkido*, in: Black Belt, Vol. 3, No. 8, 1965, p. 42.

⁴⁹ Just like the Spanish fencers tried to catch up with the dominating Italians. Ch. Blair, *Quel-lamanestarnbado: the Spanish response to the Italian fencing tradition, 1665–1714*, in: *ActaPeriodicaDuellatorum*. Vol. 3, No. 1, 2015, pp. 63–100.

to other systems and forgotten, or it became a peripheral concern and transformed into different activities.⁵⁰

On the contrary, a successfully adopted style continued to evolve, responded flexibly to the changing requirements and was transformed into more specialisations under the management of the *Continuators*. They usually did not reach an absolute consensus on the future direction of a given school and created new styles⁵¹ which were based on the original school, but with different elements and different teaching methods and strategies.⁵²

Such a successful style very soon left its *Homeland*. This would already take place during the *Founder's* lifetime, if he did not directly refuse to teach foreigners. Foreign warriors studied the style and, after completing their training⁵³, often left the *Homeland*, became *Missionaries* of the system and returned to their own homelands. There they founded their own martial schools or taught only a few chosen students.⁵⁴

In its *Homeland*, the style may have acquired an exclusive position and its handing over may have been regulated by local, caste or ethnic and religious requirements. In such a case, it may have become a full-fledged martial art with its own philosophy, divided in several schools with similar combat principles, but it may have also self-destructively isolated itself from the ever-changing combat reality and become a fossilised science, not responding to modern methods and thus losing

50 Some elements of martial styles may have been transferred to folk dances, like in Ireland. T. A. GREEN — J. R. SVINTH, *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia of History and Innovation*, pp. 223–224. The positions applied by the old Spanish School have been used in the movements of toreadors. J. MCCORMICK, *Bullfighting: Art, Technique and Spanish Society*, London 2017, p. 135.

Tai Chi spread throughout the world, but mostly as a health exercise. Y. JWING-MING, *Tai Chi Chuan — Classical Yang Style: The Complete Long Form and Qigong*, Wolfeboro 2010, p. xi.

51 The continuators followed on from Liechtenauer in several lines and his style probably survived him for 200 years. However, the approaches of the continuators changed according to the current needs. D. Hagedorn, German Fechtbücher from Middle Ages to the Renaissance, in: D. JAQUET — K. VERELST — T. DAWSON, *Late Medieval and Early Modern Fight Books: Transmission and tradition of Martial Arts in Europe (14th-17th Centuries)*, Leiden 2016, pp. 251–252.

Despite Funakoshi's desire to maintain a unified Karate-Do, several styles developed from his teaching, further expanding the number of existing schools. G. FUNAKOŠI, p. 29.

52 It is not that they disrespected the original art, but there was simply a need to make a change to achieve particular goals. Shodokan Aikido contains offensive actions, though they are only focused on the opponent's stability, despite the fact that strictly defensive Aikido allows attack only in the way of a contra-technique. However, initiating offensive action is necessary in sporting combat. See the basic Randori-No-Kata. N. SAUNDERS, *Aikido: The Tomiki Way*, Victoria 2003, p. 12.

53 This training often took many years. ChatanYara (1668–1756) allegedly spent 20 years studying in China, before returning to Okinawa. T. HEINZE, *Die Meister des Karate und Kobudo: Teil 1: Vor 1900*, Seelow 2009, p. 27.

54 The masters often felt that their style, which they had studied hard for many years, belonged mainly to them and they did not want to teach a large number of students. In extreme cases, they kept it all to themselves. D. F. DRAEGER, R. W. SMITH, pp. 21–22.



its informative advantages in competition with other systems.⁵⁵ If the art was open to changes, its evolution would continue and remain valid for many years, as its extinction would only be caused by a fundamental change. However, the style could continue to work by ignoring the outdated part of its curriculum and focusing on the current market situation. In such a case, the ideas and methods of the *Founder* lived on, although they were applied with different weaponry, in a different area of combat, or the system's centre of gravity shifted to another activity.⁵⁶ The art could thus completely withdraw from the battlefields, and, despite losing most of its political importance, successfully complete other functions by being shifted to the area of civil protection or sport.⁵⁷

Abroad, the teaching of a successful art was carried on in a foreign environment and was often combined with local combat styles. In this way, a new style could be created, based on both local and foreign principles. In time, the legacy of the *Homeland* gradually disappeared and only the local influences prevailed.⁵⁸ The teaching of *Missionaries* was easily overshadowed by local masters who focused on domestic requirements. The *Missionaries'* students or warriors of the next generations, who lacked a comprehensive knowledge of the system, may have returned to the *Homeland* to learn their missing skills, or at least to draw inspiration for their own studies.⁵⁹ A local offshoot could thus be created under some kind of "supervision" of the original maternal style, also gaining a distinct character.

According to its own viability, a school could work in the *Homeland* even for a few centuries. Its tradition could be maintained by the long-lasting principle, which was

55 Isolation is accompanied by hibernation — a phase in which we can find some of the traditional martial art styles today, although they are theoretically very sophisticated. The technically perfect Spanish School, which is sometimes considered more of a self-defence system on a scientific basis rather than fencing, probably went through this phase as well. Ch. Blair, *Quellamanestarnerbado: the Spanish response to the Italian fencing tradition, 1665–1714*, p. 65.

56 The Shaolin Wushu stopped focusing primarily on fighting with a staff and, according to the contemporary trends, focused on fighting without weapons. M. SHAHAR, *The Shaolin Monastery*, p. 3.

Bruce Lee based his art on the principles of Wing Chun, which usually specialises in close-quarter hand techniques, but he also added the techniques of high kicks and Western boxing. Furthermore, he analysed the then popular and frequently practised systems and created his JeetKune Do, which was supposed to lack all rules or forms. B. LEE, *Jeet Kune Do*, Tokyo 2015, pp. 37–45, 47.

57 This was the case for most martial arts. Moreover, the systems without weapons never really had the power to decide war conflicts and thus had only a demonstrative and symbolic role in political combat. M. SHAHAR, s. 3. cf. T. A. GREEN, *Martial Arts of the World: A-Q*, p. 435.

58 Eventually, they were considered local styles. K. GIL, K. CHUL-HWAN, *Taekwondo perfekt 1*, p. 7.

59 Even today, some practitioners of Karate-Do still seek Chinese masters from whom to draw inspiration for their practice methods. For example, researcher Patrick McCarthy, the translator of the legendary manual of combat called *Bubishi*. P. MCCARTHY, *Bubishi: The Classic Manual of Combat*, North Clarendon 2016.



quite common in the military field in the pre-industrial era.⁶⁰ However, some styles may have been doomed to extinction after losing their brilliant *Founders*. For example, an art could be rejected for its over-complexity, which was unsuitable for military training, as soldiers needed to be quickly trained and sent on to the battlefield. Nor was it suitable for civilians who had insufficient time to practise.⁶¹ However, a complex school could be simplified or practised at least for health reasons and physical fitness. In such a case, it completely stopped reflecting contemporary combat needs and went into hibernation. It could come out of hibernation at any time, if somebody invested sufficient efforts and resources to master its complex form and update it according to the combat needs of the time. By creating a steady curriculum, simpler than the original style, the art could again become tolerable for the ordinary practitioner.⁶²

Regardless of how great and adaptable a style was, it never lived forever.⁶³ With the emergence of ever-new formations created according to contemporary demands, the old style again began to fight for its existence and sooner or later lost the battle. The masters of the old arts and systems were defeated by new *Founders*, *Continuators* and *Missionaries*. It was impossible to adapt to the new revolutionary changes, as the

60 Some obsolete schools found their use even after the change in warfare. For example, Jukenjutsu — the art of bayonet combat — was developed in Japan from traditional spear fighting, as the Japanese found the French bayonet system inadequate. T. A. GREEN — J. R. SVINTH, *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia of History and Innovation*, p. 580.

61 Today, Krav Maga and most other self-defence systems are based on the principle of simplicity and easy applicability. The author of this article believes that a competent *Reformer* can create just such a form of self-defence from every combat system by using only the basic elements.

62 This is what Jigoro Kano (1860–1938) did. With the difference that Jiu-Jitsu schools were still in decline, not in hibernation.

Kano studied the schools of Jiu-Jitsu (Tenshin Shinto-Ryu, the compilation of the schools of Shin No Shinto-Ryu and Yoshin Ryu, and Kito-Ryu). He realised that the ancient art needed to be simplified and regularly practised through sporting combat, in order to be fully functional in a short time of training. T. A. GREEN — J. R. SVINTH, *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia of History and Innovation*, pp. 127–128. Therefore, he created Judo and incorporated into it everything he considered effective and easy to learn in order for it to be as effective as possible. This philosophy can be evidenced by the disappointment that Kano felt after Funakoshi stated that Karate exercises could be grasped no sooner than in one year's time. G. FUNAKOŠI, p. 45.

Today, there are the specific and essentially quite romantic attempts to revive, or rather recreate, the extinct styles that are supported only by fragmentary evidence and ambiguous combat manuals. Such attempts were probably rather rare in the past and were conducted only to “borrow” particular techniques that could be useful. For example, we cannot say this was the case with Jukenjutsu, as the masters using the old spear techniques (Sojutsu) were still alive and the continuity was not interrupted. T. A. GREEN — J. R. SVINTH, *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia of History and Innovation*, p. 580.

63 It is absolutely impossible for any style to survive unchanged for hundreds of years. We can talk about the thousand-year tradition of Kung Fu/Wushu, but only as a constantly changing formation of a whole range of styles and arts that interact with each other, live in symbiosis and coexistence, or eliminate each other in competition. Author's note.



new style completely controlled the environment and the modernisation of the old style was too uneconomical and demanding. The organisational structure began to disintegrate and students moved to the newly established styles. The old style thus remained abandoned, without competent *Continuators*. A small number of traditionalists tried to maintain its legacy, but it was impossible, due to their professional disagreements and the organisational excessiveness of the dying system.⁶⁴ Therefore, within a few generations, a famous martial style was preserved only as a name whose meaning was unknown to many.

CONCLUSION

The circle seems to have closed, but the legacy of most martial styles lives on. In ancient times, the first *Founders* laid solid foundations, archetypal patterns valid in every time and place, although usable in different situations.⁶⁵ New forms of combat thus contained a great many ancient methods of a whole number of styles⁶⁶ that also benefited from their ancestors.⁶⁷ Ever since ancient times, combat techniques and general knowledge have spread simultaneously with political infiltration to foreign territories and along trade routes, ensured by troops and numerous armed protectors of merchant caravans. In the long term, it remains quite impossible and

⁶⁴ Traditional martial arts clubs (as modern Asian martial arts are called today) suffer from the outflow of practitioners that move over to the popular MMA, other full-contact sports and self-defence systems. Despite that, traditional martial arts are still divided into many styles. D. S. FARRER — J. WHALEN-BRIDGE, *Martial Arts as Embodied Knowledge: Asian Traditions in a Transnational World*, New York 2011, pp. 3–4.

⁶⁵ The position of the body during Fiore's *Iron Gate* and during ShiodaGozo's (1915–1994) basic *kamae* (stance) is apparently used only minimally. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California. MS Ludwig XV 13. fol. 9 r. cf. S. GOZO — Y. GOZO, *Total aikido: The Master Course*, p. 21.

⁶⁶ Today's popular MMA is nothing other than a synthesis of the basic techniques of Western Boxing, Muay Thai and Jiu-Jitsu, adapting to the changing rules. D. S. FARRER — J. WHALEN-BRIDGE, *Martial Arts as Embodied Knowledge*, pp. 3–4.

The basic combat stance in MMA gradually became similar to that of Ancient Greek Pankration. It is due to the similar rules and the resulting ideal type of collision that provides the practitioner with an advantage for both attack and defence in a discipline that allows striking techniques and body-to-body combat.

⁶⁷ Western Boxing was created in the 16th century. Its old version was based mainly on the principles and movements used in fencing. These principles, which are evident in the photographs of boxers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, disappeared with the transformation of “fisticuffs” into modern Boxing with gloves, as we know it today. The old Boxing did not allow some modern methods, as they were too dangerous for unprotected hands. It also contained a lot of techniques that are banned today. A. J. POLLACK, *John L. Sullivan: The Career of the First Gloved Heavyweight Champion*, Jefferson 2006, p. 16.

Today's Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is created on the basis of the techniques of Kano Kodokan's Judo. T. A. GREEN, *Martial Arts of the World: A–Q*, p. 52

Muay Thai is a combat sport, focusing on strikes, which was demonstrably present in the territory of present-day Thailand in the 18th century. *Ibid.* p. 350.



hypothetical to describe which art was directly or indirectly influenced by a particular style.

However, we can assume that there is some sort of a “*Fore-System*”. A set of ideal movement patterns usable in specific situations, which over time variably dominate different areas of martial arts. *Fore-System* is very little, if at all, influenced by social differentiations. *Fore-System*, as a database of perfect principles, is indestructible, to some extent unforgettable, and with its universality also easy to restore and rediscover, if need be.⁶⁸

On the contrary, individual styles, although containing some elements of the *Fore-System*, are time-limited formations that can be destroyed within decades or centuries. The fact that no living martial art in its present form has a demonstrable link to the systems that are at least 500 years old, are proof of this.

The specifics of particular styles are usually reminiscent of certain weaponry or social customs. Regardless of their level of development, they are doomed to extinction, if society regards these factors as irrelevant or obsolete. Insufficient flexibility of the bearers of their curricula can significantly accelerate their extinction.

The term “hybridisation”, which is considered a modern advancement of globalisation, seems quite empty in the light of the law of this evolutionary theory of martial arts. However, it is just a myth, because the creation of hybrid systems is a matter of the whole history of martial arts and, in a certain sense, hybridisation is the basis of the origin of all combat styles.

In the present confusion, it is thus apparently impossible to prove whether a particular school deserves to be called “national” or not. However, it is good to know the complex historical background of the origin of particular arts and systems. They are usually a compilation of long-term studies of many people from different territories, rather than a product of the enlightenment of individual founders. It is certain that the warrior elite has always been international and drawn from the knowledge of many local and foreign ancestors.⁶⁹ This article does not claim that it was impossible to learn a good martial art in the local environment. It was possible for sure, but mainly thanks to individuals who had already taken the difficult path to a “higher” art.

Scientific interest in combat was not the domain of many. For that reason, only some arts survived longer periods of time, or at least left their traces in history. The styles of fantasists, obscurants and insufficiently competent warriors were soon forgotten. And so will they be in future.

68 At least in terms of larger time units. It is “only” a matter of decades to rediscover and recreate a style on the basis of existing styles. We can observe this in the example of the rapidly evolving HEMA (Historical European Martial Arts), which started as an amateur leisure activity and has become an area of professional interest during the past 30 years. However, we need to realise that its research was significantly accelerated, as it takes place worldwide. For more information, see: *ActaPeriodicaDuellatorum*.

69 For example, there is a theory that the Ancient Greet Pankration was brought to Asia by the troops of Alexander the Macedonian and influenced Indian, Chinese and eventually also Korean and Japanese martial art styles. I. MORELLO, *The Origins of Martial Arts: Pankration*, Morrisville, 2012. p.15.

Even if this theory was true, and it could be partly true, it cannot be evidenced.



Being aware of the roots of a particular combat style can provide theoreticians with valuable information and will open a new door for practitioners on their journey to knowledge. Whether a style is “national” or not, it deserves protection, just like any other cultural heritage. Its loss not only means the end of the legacy of famous masters, but also the loss of knowledge that had to be collected for several generations. It may happen in future that this knowledge will be rediscovered (or recreated, in the worst case) in a difficult way and at great expense.

The author considers it a huge loss that the teaching of traditional forms of martial arts are abandoned and rejected for being too obsolete, while the real reason is that they are not understood. The truth is that this very knowledge is a living piece of history. It comprises a set of skills that were considered very important by ancient masters and that can become the “property” and part of anyone who expresses the willingness to study.