

Karate casus in Poland – towards sociology of martial arts

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Summary

In the perspective of developing sociology of martial arts and the humanist theory of far eastern martial arts the authors present the sociological reflection on the case of institutionalization of karate in Poland and – in particular – in Rzeszow. They discuss the phenomenon of development and popularization of karate on the global, domestic, regional and local scale. They analyze the role of the pioneers and the leaders of a given style as well as the transmission channels of different schools.

Karate is constantly changing, modifying and multiplying – new varieties being in accordance with new concepts of teaching, technique and tactics of fight or sport are born, or they may result from other understanding of the sense of the karate way. New styles emerge according to the regularity of 'completing the program' of a school with new added contents by the creator of this school.

The diversity of offers on the karate market is undoubtedly beneficial for a person interested in choosing the style suitable for him or her. Popularization and institutionalization of karate allows not only to practice different sporting varieties of karate on a high level, also in Rzeszow – the capital of the Podkarpacie region – but also valuable varieties of the way of karate rejecting sporting competition. On the regional scale, everything that concerns the cultural phenomenon of karate on the global scale is reflected.

Introduction – theoretical assumptions

Based on theoretical assumptions of the developing new sub-branch of sociology, namely sociology of martial arts [1,2] and referring to the humanistic system theory of martial arts of the Far East [3,4], the authors present the description of karate institutionalization in Poland, particularly in Rzeszów.

Sociologic theories should be characterized by explanatory quality and predictive accuracy. It should anticipate the future of social reality [5, s. 176]. Therefore, after explanation of the phenomenon of karate popularity and institutional development, an attempt was made to indicate the factors allowing us to predict further organizational or customary changes in the European and Polish karate.

The theory of cultural dialogue is interesting because of its cognitive and explanatory potential. Social and cultural studies of multicultural dialogues related to Asian martial arts are now fairly advanced and may add the deepened philosophic and sociologic interpretation to the humanistic martial arts theory [6,7]. Particularly, the described "secondary effect" of martial arts among western communities [8,9] is interesting

as regards karate (as a cultural phenomenon). Karate, like other eastern martial arts and combat sports is part of Far Eastern culture and directly transfers some specific ideas to our civilization, evoking interest in the entire original cultural context of East Asian legacy.

Karate on a global scale

The phenomenon of karate and other eastern martial arts popularity on a global scale is very interesting from the perspective of sport sociology, or culture sociology and culture dialogues. The worldwide popularity of eastern martial arts in western culture and other cultures results, first of all, from fascination with the technical perfection and utilitarian values of the East Asian systems [10]. The development of martial arts made western communities explore the entire cultural background of this phenomenon.

This issue is interesting not only for sociologists and researchers, but also for the karate masters who are experts in this field. For example, master Shigeru Egami, one of the best practitioners (apart from Gigo Funakoshi, Tekeshi Shimoda and Hirokazu Kanazawa) of the famous meijin Gichina



Funakoshi, asked contemporary karatekas about the reasons of karate popularity. He also asked them about the purpose of training. According to him, "multiple groups" in European and American countries overtake the "eastern way of thinking", there are however many schools that teach sole fighting techniques (karate-jutsu). He wrote: "The , instinct of aggression is rooted in humans to almost the same extent as it is rooted in animals, but in my opinion, this has very little to do with a real art [11, s. 17]. Besides, Egami indicated the negative effect of movies and television on human minds, demented the false belief in "deadly karate blows" and referred to the spiritual aspects of karate, emphasized by Gichin Funakoshi.

The movies presenting martial arts favor the increase in karate popularity, but sometimes do show its false image. Some "action" movies show karate as something sensational and mysterious – as did the first founder of Polish Karate Association – Janusz Świerczyński [12], other – as acts of aggression and violence as Colin G. Goldner does [13].

Apart from the issue of karate popularity, which is very interesting for the researchers, the problems of adaptation of this martial art, as well as transformation, institutionalization and promotion of different styles should also be explained. The worldwide range of karate is associated with global "interaction profusion" [14]. The export of karate from Japan to western countries, connected with the exodus of instructors [15] originated a series of effects and feedbacks, resulting from karate engagement in the process of global cultural exchange. The changing phenomenon of karate, as a global issue, requires analysis of the causes of such changes. Modifications and adaptations result mainly from confrontation with western culture and differences in mentality between the American and European population of the late 20th century [16,17,18,19]. Thus, karate undergoes transformation from a martial art and lifestyle to sport and spectacular forms of combat [compare: 20,21,22,23,24]. Likewise, the above statement may refer to other martial arts, subject to cultural globalization process. The changes resulting in karate transformation into an Olympic sport are especially noted in judo [25,26] and taekwondo [27], but the examples of adaptive changes may be also found in those martial arts that do not involve contest, like aikijutsu [28].

Karate is a "new budo" [29]. It was introduced to Japanese martial arts by master Funakoshi from Okinawa. In central Japan, the main styles of Japanese karate were developed, which were modified versions of the original forms started on Okinawa. There, classic karate styles, such as shorin-ryu and uechi-ryu are still practiced. Modern schools and styles often combine the elements of the Okinawa Japanese, Korean and Chinese styles.

Modification of the techniques and training programs may be due to the "principle of program complementation" being a certain regularity. According to this principle, the instructor who does not know all the ideas of a given style, completes the program by incorporating the knowledge acquired somewhere else, this way creating a new school. The schools were developed on Okinawa – by adding new elements to the local

experts' knowledge of new kung-fu elements. The classical styles from Okinawa and Japan were developed in a similar way, and following these rules, next schools and styles were popularized beyond Japan.

The scale of karate institutionalization [30] as for its organizational development, is illustrated by a large number of schools, sports clubs, associations and federations. The diversity of karate forms results in the diverse market of physical culture and martial arts. On the other hand however, the differences in sport combat code as well as organizational breakup indicate immaturity of karate as a sport discipline.

The national scale

Poles were quite often made to learn karate from European instructors. In the 70s of the 19th century, the first masters of Polish shotokan and kyokushinkai karate leaders were Dutch, Italian or French. In west European countries also the leading Japanese instructors worked, who were representatives of the five main karate styles. Kondratowicz [31], Milkowski [32], Fechner and Ruciński [33], Cynarski [4,8] and others wrote about karate travel: from Japan to Europe and Poland. Before it was possible to travel to the "origins" of this martial art, and karate schools worldwide, two rival karate styles were introduced in Poland – shotokan and kyokushinkai. Based on these techniques, Polish Karate Association was established seat with its in Warsaw (in 1980). This association, as a sports organization, developed (and continues to develop) karate, mainly in its sport form [34,35]. Its leaders are Wacław Antoniak and Andrzej Drewniak.

The shotokan style was promoted, among others by Milkowski [32] and Skurska [36].

As for kyokushinkai style, the published handouts were mostly used by the clubs promoting this style. Foreign publications serve Polish karate pioneers to acquire knowledge about this martial art. Also some pirate copies of Oyama's, Funakoshi's and other author's books on karate were in circulation. There was a split in shotokan style worldwide and in Poland, shortly after the death of Masatoshi Nakayama, regarded (beside Egami) the official leader of this style. Nakayama already caused the split in the style, promoting sport karate, while Egami still favored the art in the form of karate-do.

Also after Oyama's death, organizational split was still observed in kyokushinkai style [37,38].

American fractions or the derivatives of both these styles, such as ITKF – International Traditional Karate Federation founded by Hidetaka Nishiyama (practicing, as they say a "traditional" style) and oyama karate (World Oyama Karate Organization) founded by Shigeru Oyama. In Poland, the leader of Polish oyama karate, Jan Dyduch (7 dan) is the president of Polish Karate Federation, founded beyond and in opposition to Polish Karate Association. Previously he had cooperated for many years with A. Drewniak from Krakow. There is another separate organization – Polish Traditional karate Association with the seat located in Łódź, with Włodzimierz Kwieciński – the leader.

Nowadays in Poland there is a wide spectrum of karate schools and styles, more or less known worldwide. This pluralistic mosaic structure includes both the styles of karate oriented towards spectacular forms and Olympic status the World Karate Federation (WKF) and S. Oyama dreamed of, as well those based on totally different prerequisites.

Among the main trends, the following "philosophies" of karate should be mentioned:

Karatedo – practiced for personality development without sport contest [39,40,41,42];

1. Karate – different forms of sport competition;
 - shotokan and related (differences in sport fight rules) [32,36];
 - kyokushin and related (contact forms, the knock-down formula) [43,44,45];
 - all-style karate and kick-boxing [46], rejecting philosophy;
2. Karate practiced for the purpose of self-defense only (karate-jitsu) [20];
3. Recreational karate, practiced mostly for fun or for health reasons, etc.

The regional scale

Institutionalization and functioning of official and legal institutions – karate associations – requires further exploration and description [47]. There were few monographs reporting the sport achievements of different clubs and district associations in Podkarpacie, however these papers lack reflections and interpretation of regional institutions dealing with karate from the point of view of sociology.

As early as within a few years following the foundation of the very first karate schools in Poland – in Łódź, Szczecin and Krakow, attempts were made to incorporate this art in Rzeszów – the capital of Podkarpacie. Jacek Wołk, who virtually brought this martial art to Rzeszów, was the pioneer of shotokan style. His interest in karate started when he was a student at the Maria Skłodowska University of Lublin, where a group of students practiced amateur karate based on Funakoshi's book "Karate-do Kyohan". Next, in Szczecin his instructors were Kazimierz Krukowski (the main founder of shotokan in the north Poland) and Jozef Zveřina from former Czechoslovakia (that time – the first dan) during the training camp in Mrzeżyno in 1975. Jacek Wołk organized first shotokan training, being the only instructor of this form of karate in Rzeszów (III Comprehensive High School, Students Sports Club at the University of Technology of Rzeszów, "Stal" sports club in Rzeszów). The above mentioned first karate schools in Rzeszów were founded in 1975, and a year later, the first official karate clubs were officially registered. Based on the three groups training this style, the Rzeszów Karate Club was established in 1984. Its first president was Marek Nosal [48, 49]. Among the leading karatekas, practicing this style there were: R. Kolano, M. Kazanowski and M. Herba. The training contacts with W. Kwieciński (the later 6 dan) and I. Jorga (presently 8 dan) resulted in 1 dan awarded to R. Kolano – the karate instructor in 1986.

In 1991 Poland joined the Traditional Karate Federation Fudokan and changed the club name to Rzeszów Club of Traditional karate. In sport competitions, the trainees of sensei Ryszard Kolano (4 dan) won multiple medals in ITKF tournaments of the highest rank. Among the best karatekas were M. Niewczas, S. Garbacki, M. Kazanowski, A. Czyrka and A. Przydrożny [50], as well as C. Stankiewicz. Kolano gained the status of an international referee.

For several years, Marta Niewczas has been running the Karate Academy, representing, as a competitor, the Rzeszów University Sports Club [51]. Among her numerous achievements we should mention winning ITKF World Cup twice in Warsaw (1993 and 1995). She is also an effective sport activist and organizes ITKF European Championships (Rzeszów, June 2006).

Soon after the introduction of shotokan in Rzeszów at the University Club of Rzeszów University of Technology, the kyokushinkai style began to be practiced. We may owe this to Jerzy Świdorski (later 1 dan) and his Krakow masters Andrzej Drewniak (presently 7 dan) and Lesław Samitowski (5 dan). During that time, everybody who wanted to practice one of eastern martial arts, but was not interested in sport judo, had an opportunity to select one of the above karate styles. Even several hundred karatekas trained at one gymnasium. This was the period of karate boom in Poland, initiated by the films with Bruce Lee. The University Club section-based Rzeszów Kyokushinkai Karate Club was active in late 80s and early 90s (about 1986-1992) of the previous century. Among its best karatekas were: Jacek Melkowski, Krystian Niemiec, Włodzimierz Cupryś, Wiktor Bajor, Piotr Kozak, Bogdan Gajecki and Wojciech Cynarski.

Later sensei Świdorski left Rzeszów and part of the participants decided to train oyama karate. The leaders of this form of karate were P. Kozak and K. Niemiec, who was later awarded 2 dan. The District karate Association, organized by Roman Woźniak (4 dan), the kyokushinkai instructor from Iwonicz and Krosno, still coordinates – on behalf of Polish karate Association – running such clubs in Podkarpacie. However, the dominant position in this region is occupied by ITKF traditional karate with its clubs in Rzeszów, Lubaczów (C. Stankiewicz 4 dan) and other cities.

Making karate a combat sport (tournament system, leagues) is connected with the process of progressive commercialization of martial arts [52,4]. In the era of progressive and extreme sport commercialization, karatekas fight to win the Hunyadi-Express All-Style Sportkarate Cup [53] or train at "Multifarb Rzeszów" club (the former Rzeszów Club Of Traditional Karate). The commercial "Karate Academy" organizes karate tournaments and promotes "traditional karate". Is sport karate the only possible way? Isn't it manifestation of western influence and regression from the level of "moral evolution to strength combat sport [compare: 20, 18,4,26]?

An interesting hybrid of traditional spiritual "peaceful hand way" karate principles (zendo karate tai-te-tao) created by Peter K. Jahnke was adopted in Rzeszów by W. Cynarski [54, 42]. To acquire this knowledge, he traveled to honbu – the

headquarters of dojo – where, since January 1993, he had been trained by the leader of this style as his "internal practitioner" (uchi-deshi). Meijin Lothar Sieber (10 dan) further promoted Cynarski to 4 dan in zendo karate tai-te-tao, also called idokan karate [55,56]. It was incorporated in Rzeszów through Polish Idokan Association and shibu (an official agency, domestic headquarters) promoting this style [47,41]. Master L. Sieber was the first holder of 10 dan. In 1997, he organized an international training in the form of "Summer Jujutsu / Karate School" [57]. The spiritual idokan style rejects, according to its creator Peter K. Jahnke contest in fighting. In turn, it accepts competition of spectacular technical forms. The style, combined with jujutsu is part of idokan yoshin-ryu system.

Summing up

Karate is most often taught as the ideas of different schools or styles. The future pioneers are trained in different centers to initiate their own sections or clubs in their home towns. Sometimes the new style pioneers are taught by foreign masters to become future national leaders.

The principle of "program complementation" results in the establishment of new schools. This way Japanese styles we-

re originated and modern forms of this martial art were created beyond Japan. The new ideas and qualities are somehow against tradition, developing in different directions, according to different concepts of karate philosophy understanding.

Emancipation of karate instructors causes that the practitioners of national or local leaders do not always continue their previous style and their understanding of karate changes too. Sometimes they chose their own way – private business or other organization. The new leaders, practicing new styles, in the past practiced the only styles available – in Podkarpacie and Rzeszów – one of the two styles popular in Poland that time.

Institutionalization of karate particularly pertains to the acceptance of new structures (regional and national sport associations, organizations or federations) and the systems of competition (regional and national championships). This also pertains to awarding grades and instructor's licenses, instructors' competence, and the dependency on association authorities and karate style school leaders.

On the regional scale, this is reflected by adequate proportions of everything which pertains to the cultural phenomenon of karate on the global scale. These relations, as well as the already mentioned regularities, will be probably preserved through two next decades.

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