

Judo contribution to martial arts – techniques, strategies, values

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Summary

The article came about after some recollections of the beginnings of Polish judo combined with the history of Japanese judo. The aims of the founder of Kodokan, Jigoro Kano, have been compared with the trends of Polish beginnings and consequently the Polish model of judo progress. Several anniversaries have been reminded in order to reconstruct the lines of development of judo sport. Reflecting on the times of decline of the Polish judo after the decades of its spectacular progress, the author reminds the vision of judo expansion in the world based on the principles of non-violence, education aims and mutual welfare.

Reflections and debates about the scientific contributions to the practice of contemporary martial arts and their standards set in 2012 should have been started with the remark about the unique historical moment in their transformations. For judo, it is the year of several important anniversaries. That remark is particularly relevant for Polish issues. A quarter of century ago the group of scholars from the Warsaw Institute of Sport launched the project of organizing the International Congress of Judo Sciences. The conference aimed at the integration of many interdisciplinary scholar researches concerning the practice of judo and at the promotion of the results among the coaches, the leading competitors and the leaders of Polish Judo Association in the quest of Olympic progress of their discipline. Such gatherings could be derived from the spirit of *jita kyoei*, the first principle standing for the background of Jigoro Kano practice serving for common welfare, leading to progress and prosperity.

The Chairman of the Organizing Committee and spokesmen for these interdisciplinary encounters was Waldemar Sikorski, Deputy Director of the Institute of Sport. This conference has been the great event in the world of martial sports science. Collective book aimed at the integration of theoretical and practical efforts has been published in English version in 1987.

I happened to be there as one of the spokesmen for the interdisciplinary and inter-cultural approach to judo, having the floor just after the legendary world and Olympic champion and famous coach Anton Geesink who opened the debates. I wondered, if Jigoro Kano would recognize his final product in the Olympic disguise built up on international experience of judo competition and melted with divergent theories of combat sports.

As the interdisciplinary cooperation aimed at spectacular success of the group of some leading Polish judo fighters it has been backed up by comprehensive strategies of Polish Judo Association and by joint teaching of Polish and Japanese coaches and the researches of experienced scholars from divergent fields, these comprehensive efforts resulted in tremendous progress of the discipline – in last decades of the 20th Century the best Polish judokas won the highest European, world and Olympic awards.

It is not a surprise, though, that the idea of integrity of theoretical and practical efforts, which went wayward at the beginnings of Polish political and economic transition, came back to our minds several times at the moment of marked decline of the role of Polish judo team in the world. Aiming to restore the integration of theory and practice, our scholars published several important books - about the contribution of Warsaw Institute of Sport to the science of judo, about the past times of the Polish Olympic judo success. From the milieu of scholars specialized in martial art praxiology comes the effort to construct the general theory of hand to hand combat. The book about anthropology, philosophy and sociology of martial arts is being prepared. During the first decade of the new millennium the concept of coming back to multidimensional, comprehensive researches on judo progress has been discussed during several Congresses of Combat Sports sponsored by Rzeszów University. Then we have come to the last project, the of Warsaw International Conference Science to Judo Practice aimed at 2012.

Another anniversary in 2012 marks the beginning of Polish competitive presence in the domain of martial arts. About a half of century ago the Polish Judo Association organized

a system of international judo competitions aimed at highest standards of judo teaching and the intensive combat practice verified in the European dimension. The joint effort of competitors, coaches and scholars backed up by the Polish Judo Association created the conditions to organize in Poland the International Warsaw Tournament. Among best competitors coming to Warsaw of the 60s were the champions of Europe, the winners of world championship, and later the outstanding judokas coming from many Asiatic countries. It is worth emphasizing the importance of such test for the Polish quest for the international success seeming at that time far away. Among the first finalists and winners there were two Polish fighters, S. Tokarski in 1963/4, J. Okrój in 1965 and among the beaten by Poles in these years of first big contests were champion of Europe Bourreau, vice-champion of Europe Reisinger, Russian leading challenger Natalenko, Lischke from Vienna -the European semifinalist and the future lightweight Swiss finalist of Olympic games in Tokyo – Erich Henni.

In the next quarter of the century the cooperation of scholars and coaches helped the Polish Judo Team to achieve repeatedly the highest Olympic, European and world standards. Dating from the beginning of Polish transition of the 70/s they won some important international awards. We should remember then the golden and silver Olympic medals (Waldemar Legień – twice gold, Pawel Nastula – gold, Janusz Pawłowski, Aneta Szczepańska and Antoni Zajkowski – silver), many Polish winners in different weight categories, not mentioning the first prizes of Polish men and women in all category world championships.

The Polish transitions in the domain of martial arts cannot be properly understood without considering the issues of more general perspective. The XX Century way of judo to the West became the sound reality. But in this quest judo is not alone any more. the example of judo has been followed by other Asiatic martial arts. Exemplary pattern of the pioneer Japanese martial art turned into sport has been thoroughly analysed by many other wandering systems in order to overtake the best point for the promotion. Contemporary judo has been loosing the unique position in the world of martial arts and has to cope with this issue. And moreover, many outstanding teachers have got the Western background. For these reasons we have to think over why genuine judo has lost its unique identity nowadays.

In 2012 the world of martial arts and combat sports should celebrate the most important anniversary. About hundred years ago the fame of judo as the exemplary Japanese combat sport of very high efficiency, also recognized in self-defence dimension, has been promoted by the spectacular victories of several outstanding pupils of professor Jigoro Kano. He soon became the Chancellor of Tokio University. At those times his Kodokan became the modern institute for martial arts researches aimed at modernization of Japanese combat arts and safeguarding of bushido tradition.

Introducing the sport formula helped the first Kano pupils to beat the best schools of Japanese self-defence in repeated contests. For several reasons the thoroughly modernized

and comprehensive system of Kodokan has been named judo. For ancient schools of Japanese self-defence the development of judo, at the beginning criticised by old masters, became the good news, efficiency of judo fighters made Kodokan the modern Mekka of the martial arts, it helped to survive the best techniques of many declining schools of jujutsu..

The Centenary Jubilee of spectacular development of judo in the world should be proclaimed about this year, known in Chinese calendar as the Year of Dragon.

First launched in Japan and there succeeding in dramatic encounters with many jujutsu trends, judo has been expanding all over the world as the international form of sport self-defence. What more, since 1964, in Tokyo, it has began to be the part of Olympic Games. Moreover, it has been recognized as the important Olympic discipline for half a century. The dream of Jigoro Kano came to be true. But the new, international and Olympic status has brought for some unexpected change, the developments unpredicted by this Japanese visionary.

The formula of judo as the modern sport deeply rooted in Japanese ancient past has been launched by the Japanese thinker of eminent status in his country and then in the world. There were several reasons for such spectacular expansion. Firstly, the promotion of the new discipline in sport has been combined with the ideas of physical education strictly integrated with modernization of Japanese pedagogics. As the recognized teacher and educator of highest standards, Jigoro Kano was the best spokesman of such trends. For many years Jigoro Kano had been working as the Rector of Tokyo University, then he was elected to the Japanese Parliament becoming the active member of the World Olympic Committee, at that times as the only one Asiatic representative in Olympic institutions, gave him unusual possibility to promote judo as the unique instrument for modern pedagogics.

The practitioner and visionary, as the experienced spokesman for education reforms of highest standards, he was sure that the future transitions of judo will be situated in the cross-cultural encounters. Building up the exemplary model of his system in the realm of combat sports, he outlined its road to the the West as the important civilization factor of the East-West dialogue. It worked both ways. The appearance of judo clubs in the West created the new perspective of seeing the role of combat sports in the domain of physical education. It has brought the Asiatic tastes to its practice and its philosophy. On the other hand, it has changed the perspectives of Japanese masters of martial arts, towards reception of judo. The new discipline perceived in the context of Westernisation became the exemplary product of national export. Its rapidly growing popularity could be compared to the expanding status of cricket in India

But such transformation created the not easy situation for judo. Cross-cultural encounters were combined with the trap of new identity. Was Jigoro Kano fully conscious about the consequences of multidimensional judo transition at the time of its international expansion? Launching the idea of Olympic judo that outstanding man has clearly seen the dangers of

modernizing the ancient samurai education and the possibility of losing the treasure of its precious values – courage, honour, loyalty, devotion to combat practice, zen spirit, good manners, Asiatic understanding of fair play – implied by in the code of bushido and internalised in the practice of Japanese self-defence. Nevertheless, he strongly believed that there is the way to avoid the traps of one-dimensional Westernisation of the martial arts, treating judo as the exemplary instrument of education in cultural encounters. In his mind he cherished the idea that rapidly modernizing Japan had something to offer in this respect – not only the long time experience in combat techniques but also the knowledge of the perfection of shin, the high spirit.

For this reason he has written the book about the unique values of judo not necessarily reduced to sport victories. For some obvious purposes he has published his reflections on English and in Japanese versions. His remarks are still valid. At the time of several important anniversaries I would like to remind his fundamental ideas and to reflect on them for a while.

Modern age and opening to the world brought to Japan the popularity of Western sports. For young generation they brought the chance to compete in some European disciplines and play the games defined by simple and clear rules of victory. At the end of 19th Century the young Asians began to practice football, rugby, European wrestling, boxing. The ancient Japanese art of self-defence faced the danger to be forgotten. The talented and devoted pupils were rare. As the generation of great masters were dying their secrets were coming the end.

Envisaging judo as a sport that has been derived from samurai tradition, Kano saved Japanese jujutsu schools from decline. Collecting the best techniques of many schools (ryu) of Japanese self-defence he made them a part of self-defence system slowly conquering the world. In the first half of the XX Century learning the Japanese art to win without arms became attractive and fashionable for the East and West. Kano pedagogics gave the youth the chance to learn the Japanese roots of hand to hand combat, at the same time – the chance to open to the world promoted in many international competition.

What were the reasons of judo international success? At first we have to reflect on its universal value. Kano taught his pupils the art of safe falling. That skill has been known in Japan, the idea was taken from sumo and jujutsu. But in judo its rank and standards were very much developed and self-defence of the body in movement – much more effective. The performances of judokas in this dimensions reminded at the same times acrobatic efficiency, sometimes mixed up with magic or circus art. That ability has been soon recognized within and outside of judo.

Although that was the universal contribution of judo to the domain of physical education, the art of very efficient falling down have caused that the system obviously has brought to the domain of combat sports the new quality. The contest seemed to be. close to reality, especially for the onlookers not knowing the art of falling down. At the same time it has clear feeling of victory for judo fighters, very close to feelings in the real fight, reminding self-defence situations.

The universal contribution of such skill is obvious. Even in my personal experience it has been very useful for more than 60 films where I performed as a stuntman and stuntman coach. About dozen Polish judokas passing the stunt exams after my teaching became professional stuntmen working in Polish movies for several decades. Their foundations in judo training were satisfactory for the beginning. But they had to learn jumping from the trains and lorries at high speed, falling down from horses and with horses, and so on.

I also remind myself my coaching the art of safe falling down the members of Polish National Football Team. Among the others, in this experimental training took part such well known players like Boniek, Kosedowski, Gorgoń (Piechniczek, Gmoch, Lato and Deyna were the observers). Reflecting on it I would like to remind that such skill has been for some time obligatory in the programs of primary schools in Japan and Kano was the spokesman for it arguing firmly for fundamentals of judo on medical ground – such decision decreased the number of injuries. Statistics of every year brought for Japan less and broken legs and arms. And such results have been valid not only in sport dimension but also in everyday life.

Another reason for rapid progress of judo standards in many countries created the incredible variety of its techniques. The Western world slowly learnt the astonishing possibility of using human body in fight. For a long time forgotten or maybe unknown for Western world, the techniques of judo seemed traditional and exotic, in some ways connected with yoga mastery over body, and at the same time appeared very modern in its multidimensional applications. Polish professor called them 'modern physics' applied, American producer of Star Wars inspired by such tricks with gravity put them into his cosmic fairy tales. The public of judo competition has been viewing such body language of judo tournament as we watch the Science Fiction TV. Spectacular playing with gravity, magic taming the raw violence by pure technique, knowledge above stupid power. Such were spiritual or aesthetic perspectives of first great judo contexts at the time of very different levels of technical standards if participants.

For such discoveries, the sport tournaments of judo became more and more attractive to the West. As a system of learning, judo techniques were leading to excellency of attack and defence practised in everyday training. Carefully selected, they have been chosen to avoid any harm to opponents body. Save guarded by the rules and efficient know-how of falling down, the judokas could proceed their road to excellence – in the training and in the sport competitions.

Kano choice has been deliberate. He found out the most effective techniques cherished as secret weapons by famous samurai schools of the past. He put emphasis on their diversity. The new for Westerners were not only divergent throwing techniques classified in groups of hand throws, sweepings, hip throws, attacks causing falling down on our back, counter attack, the throwing techniques demanding our previous sacrifice of balance an laying down, but also the strangulations, arm locks and immobilisations (osaekomi).

That diversity served many purposes, not only for sport context standards. Within the framework of physical and cultural education program of Kodokan, Kano insisted on the importance of self-defence dimension of judo training valid for best fighters and coaches. In the system of ritual choreographies (kata) he taught the jujutsu self-defence obligatory to pass exams for black belts (dan). What more. Kodokan judokas of higher ranks were obliged to train not only judo, but also kendo, aikido and karate -working with masters of these arts. That program has been established as budo learning. Hundred years ago Harris wrote in his book that Kodokan experts knew the art of vital blows (atemi) rarely but surely used in street self-defence because of the bans of involvement in riots for Kodokan experts. Such multidimensional training.

In the beginnings, the efficiency of judo has been proved in the competitions within and outside of its contest framework. In Japan, its rankings were set up in combats with well established schools of jujutsu. In the West situation has not been very different. To the new discipline of combat sports, for example in Poland of the end of 50s, came not only the beginners but experienced acrobats, some leading wrestlers of classic and free style, rugby players etc. The promotions of judo has been sometimes connected with combats with wrestlers and boxing men. The effectiveness of Kodokan judo has been strictly connected with two cardinal principles proclaimed by Jigoro Kano. They were ancient in roots but seemed a very modern discovery in operation of the body confronted with prevailing and violent use of force.

The unifying principle was JU. common language means swiftness, lack of crude violence, elastic answer. But Kano made from JU the strategy of non-violence as effective as Gandhi's strategy of non-violence applied soundly in the domain of political and social struggle. It meant for him learning the wisdom in the battle from fire, wind and water, never confronting directly the stronger opponent but searching his weakness in unpredicted manners, steps back to attack next when not resisted push will lose the purpose. Understanding such principle in movement has been the most important part of the training. My personal experience in many international tournament reminds me, though, that many judokas equipped with splendid possibilities of their bodies, and for this reason taken into account as the future champions, were losing their ways to the serious winnings because they neglected or misunderstood JU. Such tendency seems to be present not only in the past but also in contemporary judo. Such strategy of combat seems to be safe but it leads on the road of losers in great international tournaments.

To my mind, Kano is not old fashioned neither idealist. His approach has been pragmatic, and the practical strategy is still valid. The techniques, he taught, cannot operate outside the system which means the strategy to deal with violence with non-violence means. To such dealing with violence the Europeans were usually not prepared. Nor they even suspected that JU is the top secret of the Kodokan highest standards of technical knowledge.

For many Westerners, such strategy seemed unbelievable, they rejected the magic dimension of combat, disliked a priori playing with the gravity. But Polish conscience historically rooted with struggles with Big Brother accepted the philosophy of JU. It was not a surprise in Poland of the 60s that judo attracted so many adepts adoring its unknown possibilities of technical excellency of body movement. The message of Kodokan founder has been transmitted to our perception by motto written on envelope of the book *Esprit du judo* published by J. Jazarin, the President of French Black Belt Society: "Judo is the unity of spirit and body in action".

Kano made from this dancing with gravity the comprehensive system, integrating the techniques and body language with the principle of seiryoku zenyo, maximum efficiency of spirit and body set to precise goal. It was the second cardinal rule of Kodokan. That rule strongly applied to Western souls evaluating the Japanese techniques as very modern approach.

As the result of seiryoku zenyo expressed not only in highest technical knowledge but also in praxiology applied to the domain of strategy, the smaller and weaker for the first glance Japanese judokas for several decades of pioneer expansion of judo were winning all important battles and international sport tournaments held in Japan, Europe and America. In that period the Japanese coaches went to the West and judo conquered the world. That boom slowly declined with the end of 20 Century. Following the example of judo another Asian combat system have been transformed in sport events. Taught mostly by the new generation of the Western coaches, judo became well established Olympic discipline losing its oriental appeal. Aimed mainly at winning results and awards, judo teaching weakened its exotic and educational attraction, lost its inspiring diversity.

That unification of training in order to achieve the highest standards of competitors has been conceived by Jigoro Kano as the dangerous trap. There is no need, he wrote, to reject traditional forms of exercise. Those who enjoy them should do them. His doctrine was very simple. highly recommend what is best without rejecting the things of the past. Constructing his system, Kano did not particularly oppose conventional methods of physical education advised by ancient masters of jujutsu. He only would like to device the system suitable for modern times and recommend as many people as possible to take it up.

In the struggle for Olympic results many other dimensions of judo teachings have been taken apart. And their educative values, techniques, and ways of promotion of higher values have stolen or bought by other martial arts following the example of judo. As Japanese judokas have been conquering the world in the first half of the 20th Century, the new generation of judo masters grew up in the 70s in Soviet Union, Central and Minor Asia, Georgia, China, Western and Eastern Europe. The coaches of karate, aikido, kendo and jujutsu followed the judo trails - Kano's multidimensional vision of self-defence as education, therapy and philosophy of body language. With these changes, the new generations do not

queue up for judo clubs where you could find every taste of oriental self-defence. And many most talented youngsters went go to train different martial arts, which is the case the judo must confront.

Reflecting the future ways of judo and its role in modern culture, we should not neglect the thought of Kano. Dreaming about introducing judo to Olympic Games the Great Teacher did not neglect the dimensions treated as secondary for the standards of Olympic results. He put special emphasis to view judo as unique instrument of education. He successfully introduced judo program aimed at safe falls and throwing in all Japanese primary schools. He launched judo training in secondary schools and universities. His arguments for a sound physical education rooted in the ancient jujutsu tradition were completed with his vision of judo as the training of intellect.

Intellectual training, he argued, can be considered in two ways. Although from the standpoint of learning we should not make the distinction, in actual fact, people who have sound knowledge and people who have good judgement are not the same. Caution, observation, reasoning, judgement, and imagination are mental powers, so from this standpoint we can make the slight distinction between widely knowledgeable and having sound judgement. In this way, we can make a distinction between gaining broad knowledge and developing powers of insight and judgement. The judo training viewed in educational dimension is aimed at the training of sound decision and developing its powers. That is important to train the leading personalities.

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In today's education, he continues his thought, research into what kind of connection can be made between fostering mental power and developing knowledge is quite inadequate. No educator and schoolteacher has clearly analysed this issue and lectured on it. But it is an urgent question that must be answered in great detail. The training of judo properly understood gives the student the unique possibility to develop our intellectual ability in the domain of right and effective decisions and in that respect it may be considered as complementary but very important and unique instrument in the process of education, no matter what faculty are we studying.

At the moment of highest standards set up for Olympic judo champions, being the primary interest of Polish Judo Associations, judo scholars as judo coaches, we must not forget the warnings and visions of Master Kano, in order to not contradict his wide perspective and judo fundamental values. If we do not consider such approach basically important, judo image will lose its attraction for wider public, in well remembered past, not so far to forget, creating cultural fashions for judo future. Training professionals of the highest standards do not contradict understanding judo philosophy and viewing judo as intellectual training. That idea has been exposed very clearly in many Kano writings. Though the winners of Olympic Games have not been philosophers, the judo always has been the road for thinking people.