

WAY OF THE WARRIOR JIJUTSU. INTERVIEW WITH DR JAN SŁOPECKI HANSHI

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- ethics.

Abstract:

Background and Aim. In the humanistic theory of martial arts and martial arts anthropology has been taken to reflect on the figures of the highest rank masters and their way to the mastery. In particular, it was decided to describe a case study of one high-ranking master-teacher.

Method: The method of direct interview was used, in-depth with the questions selected from the Cynarski's [2006] questionnaire. In addition, the research takes into account a broader discourse of literature. The interviewee expert also participates in the process of analyzing the indicated discourse.

Results: Jan Słopecki shows a traditionalist approach to the way of martial arts. He sees the value of *jujutsu*, among others, in observance of ethical principles. Then, *jujutsu* study is becoming an educational system. Scientific principles of coaching are added. *Jujutsu* is the way for life, also for the improvement of humanity.

Conclusion: Hierarchy of values professed by the given *sensei* affects the recognition of martial arts axiology. *Budo*, as a way of studying these martial arts, may be slightly different in terms of technical, ethical and teleological, depending on the views of a grand master. Differences may occur within the same martial art, as *jujutsu*.

INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on the figures of grand masters and their way to the mastery was taken from perspective of the humanist in martial arts theory and martial arts anthropology [Cynarski 2006, 2012].

It is the specificity of "ontogeny" in the way of martial arts that adept matures physically and technically, morally and spiritually, to the level of master (7-10 dan). This level is confirmed by other masters of the highest rank with high dan honorary degrees and honorary titles – *shihan*, *hanshi* or *meijin*.

The method of direct in-depth interview we used, with the questions selected from the tool (questionnaire) developed by W.J. Cynarski [2006: 370-376]. In addition, the research takes into account a broader discourse according to the literature [Krippendorf 2004]. The interviewee expert also participates in the process of analyzing the indicated discourse.

The methodology gives previously published interviews with Dr Heribert Czerwenka-Wenkstetten (this time 9 dan, later 10 dan), Dr Roland J. Maroteaux (8, now 9 dan) and Franz Strauss (10 dan) – outstanding figures of the *jujutsu* world [cf. Cynarski, Maroteaux 2002-2003; Czerwenka-Wenkstetten, Cynarski 2008; Strauss, Słopecki 2014].

We find in the literature biographies of masters: Choi Hong Hi (9 dan), Maxine Hong Kingston, Lothar Sieber (10 dan), Hannelore Sieber (7 dan, obecnie 9 dan), Shizuya Sato (9

dan, później 10 dan), Jacek Wysocki (7 dan), Kazuo Ito (10 dan), Yoshio Sugino (10 dan) and Prof. Wojciech Zabłocki, Grand Master of Polish sabre, both sporting and historical [cf. Bujak 2001; Cynarski 2000a, b, c, 2002-2003, 2009: 202-205; Donohue 2004; Litwiniuk, Cynarski 2008]. These are generally prominent figures from the world of martial arts. The way to the mastery extends here for the years of hard training [Cynarski *et al.* 2015], but there are also attempts to "shortcuts" [cf. Słopecki 2013]. By contrast, there are also published extensive biographical studies on historical, semi-legendary famous masters as Miyamoto Musashi [cf. Tokitsu 2004; De Lange 2011].

RESULTS – ACCORDING ANSWERS

Dr Jan Słopecki's personal data: age – 65, place of birth and residence - Warsaw, family status - wife, plus three children, education and occupation - higher, once a physical education teacher, currently researcher and lecturer in the College of Education in Sport, and *jujutsu* teacher. Time to deal with different combat sports / martial arts, contacts with the masters-teachers held degrees and qualifications: trainer *jujutsu* and *judo*; *jujutsu* grown since 1963, *judo* since 1964 till 1975. Here is what he says about himself:

<< In the year 1963 in Vienna I attended the first classes in the martial art of *jujutsu* (Jap. *jūjutsu*). After the holidays I could not find a section of *jujutsu* in Warsaw; continuing my interest I signed up for the *judo* section with elements of self-defence. Since 1964 I practiced the sport *judo* till 1975. My *judo* trainers were George Banaszak in the WKS "Gwardia", and Zbigniew Walczak while serving compulsory military service in the WKS "Aviator" (1972-1974).

In the course of learning *judo* I still developed my skills in *jujutsu* based on manual of an Austrian organization (requirements for degrees in *jujutsu*), constantly improving techniques of *jujutsu* working through the curriculum from level 6 to 3 dan. On the basis of skills in the sport of *judo* without too much trouble I assimilated *jujutsu* program, especially throwing and leverage techniques.

The first contact with *jujutsu* masters I had in Vienna - with *shihan* Josef Ebetshuber (this information is confirmed, Franz Strauss), then in the years 1976 to 1981 several times I left for Germany, where I took part in *judo* and *jujutsu* classes. I do not remember the names of masters. Since 1995 I have participated in over one hundred international internships training, as organizer of classes in *jujutsu* and self-defence. I met a lot of martial arts experts (*jujutsu*), but I was closest to the vision of the road *Budo*, which had Franz Strauss.

In 1981 I graduated the Academy of Physical Education in Wrocław in the direction of coaching and got a master's degree in sport and coaching (2nd class) in *judo*. Then I stepped to the maintainer of its coaching to ask about getting a second class coach in *jujutsu*. My request could not be realized, because there was no such specialization in Poland, and no one could be an examiner in this specialization. From that moment on my journey of *jujutsu* accelerates, because on the basis of skills and professional licenses a section of *judo* and self-defense sections based on *jujutsu* techniques were granted me. Then I run several groups *jujutsu* within the School Sports Club, residential clubs and the Society for the Propagation of Physical Culture. I spend a lot of time on perfecting the techniques of *jujutsu*, practicing the material to 5th dan.

I cannot identify a national *jujutsu* master, who in the 1980's and 90's influenced my level of education. I owe the knowledge and skills of my work and willingness to understand the principles of *jujutsu*. Only in 2004 I met Franz Strauss 10th dan, with whom the next 10 years I walked through *Budo*.

Block A

1. How did it happen that you started to deal with Far Eastern martial arts?

I had the first contact with *jujutsu* section of Vienna. A teacher who taught, he was able to instill in me a fascination with the *Budo* way (within 1 month of training); his calmness and knowledge instilled in me a desire to know martial art *jujutsu*.

2. In which circumstances it happened; what was the reason for taking training?

In 1963, during the holidays I was in Vienna. Cousins, noticing my life energy, they decided to take me to the sport and in this way I came to *jujutsu* school.

3. What role was played your teacher in your training and life? Who was?

The first contact with the teacher of *jujutsu* was very short, but this first image of the martial art has remained in my heart to this day. I cannot say definitely who played in my *Budo* way an important role, certainly none of the country. I am more self-taught *jujutsu*, because in those years in Poland was not known martial art of *jujutsu*. Since 1980s was crawl on the road to learning *jujutsu*. On the basis of acquired skills in *judo* and boxing I am constantly improving knowledge and technical efficiency in *jujutsu*. Despite many contacts with foreign masters of *jujutsu* and self-defence in the 1980s and 1990s I decided not to copy their ways of transmitting technical skills. My goal was to work in the *dojo* and independent access to expert level in *jujutsu*. In dealing with different masters I missed what I saw 10 years ago by Franz Strauss: calm knowledge, modesty, respect for tradition, respect standards of master degree system. The first teacher meant that my life bound to the deepening knowledge of *jujutsu* (1963); the second, which - after forty years of my teaching *jujutsu* - I can call my teacher and friend, Franz Strauss. His knowledge, skills and a great philosophy of *Budo* way meant that for 10 years I could learn from him the *Budo*. Unfortunately, there are few real teachers, with whom you can walk a common path.

4. Do you currently have a teacher of martial arts pathway?

I do not know, because after the departure from this world of Franz there are few teachers with whom you can share knowledge, friendship and benefit from their experience. Secondly, I have already had 52 years of training.

5. How was the way to gain your degrees and powers?

I gained the first master's degrees in *judo* (1 dan in 1973, 2 dan - 1977, later 3 dan - 2008). In *jujutsu* it was: 2 dan in 1985, 3 dan - 1987, 4 dan - 1990, 5 dan - 1993, 6 dan - 1996, 7 dan - 1998, 8 dan - 2001, 9 dan - 2006, 10 dan - 2011. The most important gesture to confirm my ability was given to me by Franz certificate of 10th dan with the appropriate entry regarding my style: *Mukashi to Kindai JūJutsu*. In self-defence *goshinjutsu*: 9 dan - 2006, 10 dan - 2011.

Trainer diploma in *judo* 2nd class - 1981, 2nd class coach diploma in *ju-jitsu* - 1999, diploma and 1st class coach in *ju-jitsu* - 2001, self-defence instructor - 2008. As the first in the country I got permission of coaching in *jujutsu*.

6. How long have you coached and why you decided to become one?

I am the trainer (*judo* and *jujutsu*) since 1981. After graduation, I hired a sports school, where I led a section of *judo* and *jujutsu* section. Having already certain degree of knowledge of *jujutsu* and *judo*, I decided to become a coach and to share with others my skills.

7. Why do you train just *jujutsu*?

Martial art of *jujutsu* is a way for life; there is not a martial art that has completed the process of progressive rationalization. You should adapt it to new challenges; it has not yet reached full process of rationalization, as a method of 'modern *jujutsu*'. It can still learn and improve, confront the various solutions with practical experience in terms of their usefulness in battle. In my style of *Mukashi to Kindai JūJutsu* I accept the traditional fighting techniques with new technical solutions. You can learn from traditional *jujutsu* rules, which improve the personality of the participants of the *jujutsu* way.



Photo – Dr Jan Słopecki, 10 dan *jujutsu*

Block B

1. What were the Far Eastern martial arts at a time when you started to take care of them? What has changed over time?

When I started to deal with *jujutsu* (1963), this martial art was not officially practiced in Poland. It reminded me of a great authority of the teacher. It was a little mysterious, but also having the strength of inner peace, holding to tradition. It changed over time. There has been treading the traditional principles of acquiring degrees. There has been equal level of education in most schools of jujutsu, which led to general discouragement masters for a thorough knowledge of this martial art. It takes some time devaluation of the ideals and traditions of martial arts.

2. What are they for you now? What a change was made and from which it stems?

It is now a way of life for me that I take myself, because I have to be careful not to involve the masters or organizations who trample the traditional system of education. There are few teachers with whom you can exchange ideas on teaching methodology.

3. For your more important is the aspect of art or sport? How much is art, and how much sport in what you are doing?

For me, the most important is the aspect of martial art. Art is 80-90%, and sports knowledge in the field is using training methods (methods resulting from scientific knowledge) and there is so much sport.

4. What is your greatest achievement in sports or martial arts?

My greatest achievement in this martial art is a nonstop route learning this martial art for 52-years. Secondly, it acquired the ability to interpret throw of traditional and modern *jujutsu*. It is ability to connect *jujutsu* techniques in technical combinations. Furthermore, the receipt 10th dan degree with entry the name of my style of *jujutsu* (*Mukashi to Kindai*) from the Great Teacher Franz Strauss.

5. What is your attitude towards meditation and spiritual exercises?

I see this as an essential way to reflect on your life, perfecting your personality, mute self, understanding your own way.

6. Did practicing martial arts change something in your life? If so, what has changed, why, and how do you assess these changes?

It changed my way of seeing people and the world. I see things harder, as they are in reality. On the other hand, I regret that people cannot find their way, just walk the path that others define them. They believe in what they impose; they do what they planned.

Block C

1. Could you tell us about the philosophy of martial arts? What are the main principles?

The philosophy of martial arts should be accompanied all the way exploration of knowledge about martial arts. It should be the guideline for all regardless of the degree. It corrects and refines our actions. The most important principles are: respect for the other person, respect for traditional principles of *jujutsu*.

2. Where did you draw the knowledge of this philosophy - or could you give some sources?

There are books, verbal several masters, behavioural observation of *Budo* people.

3. Are you attached to importance of the philosophy of martial arts? What is its significance in your life - what it gives you?

Philosophy is the most important aspect of learning about *Budo* way. Without it, a martial art would be a flower without fragrance and colour. It has important significance for me - it helps distinguish truth from falsehood.

4. Is there something you do not accept in combat sports or martial arts? Why?

I do not accept *soke* adolescent experience and age, I do not accept their ancient *agon* (think much of his own divinity). This is ridiculous and distasteful. Do not accept exaltation in titles.

5. Are the philosophy and ethics of martial arts valid only during training, combat, professions, or always (please justify)?

Philosophy and ethical principles apply always, because, when we will be teachers, we are them anywhere, anytime. I think that we are teachers only for appearances, for bowing on the mat.

Block D

1. What would you consider most important values in your life and why?

Sticking to your own rules, which are inscribed in the educational system of martial arts, regardless of the circumstances and situations in life and financial. I guided by Christian principles.

2. Is there anything else that has significant value for you?

Thanks to Providence and the confluence of the facts of life for me, the most important value is to know oneself in the context of a signpost specified by the Creator.

Block E

1. What are martial arts for your students and what have meaning in their lives?

I think that for my students past and present, martial arts are through education, common friendship. I am glad that they are able to recognize and separate functioning in the lives of some of the masters of *jujutsu* falsehood from truth that realistically evaluate their actions, knowledge and technical skills.

2. Do you note changes in this regard in the last 30-40 years?

Historically, martial arts were mysterious, more associated with traditional rules. At present, it is better understood in terms of scientific training principles.

3. Are these changes positive or negative, what reason?

The negative is that a significant part of organizations and masters does not respect the traditional rules of confer degrees. They create new methods, schools and curricula in such a way that the curricula were visually interesting for the viewer, rich in *jujutsu* techniques, forgetting about the methodology of teaching and the reality of their use in the confrontation in non sport events. They, building programs or organizations for the purpose of granting oneself to the title *soke*, want to be the most important person in the built structure.

- Other observations - or would you like to add something or explain?

- No, thank you for the interview.

DISCUSSION

Shihan Słopecki indications are generally consistent with the results of Cynarski [2006], in which the author has collected and developed speeches of martial arts' master-teachers from several European countries (using expert judgments). Also, J. Słopecki, 10 dan, *hanshi*, can be considered an expert in the field of practice *jujutsu* and art of self-defence.

The way to mastery is here similar to pathways of other grand masters, as S. Sato, H. Czerwenka-Wenkstetten or F. Strauss [Cynarski 2000b; Czerwenka-Wenkstetten, Cynarski 2008; Strauss, Słopecki 2014; Cynarski *et al.* 2015]. What is important, Warsaw *sensei* (teacher) is still active on the mat, like masters-teachers written in history of martial arts: Choi Hong Hi, Yoshio Sugino, Shizuya Sato or Lothar Sieber and Roland Maroteaux [*cf.* Cynarski 2000a, b, 2002-2003; Bujak 2001; Cynarski, Maroteaux 2002-2003].

Somewhat different is interpretation of the martial arts philosophy in the case of individual experts, but it is a matter of individually recognized hierarchy of values. By Dr Maroteaux it is a greater emphasis on aesthetics and the principles of *butoku* - military virtues of Samurai [Cynarski, Maroteaux 2002-2003]. By Słopecki we see a strong influence of his mentor - F. Strauss, on which he relied upon several times [*cf.* Strauss, Słopecki 2014].

While some experts give sportisation of martial arts as a sign of pathology, Słopecki focuses greater emphasis on lowering barriers to ethical principles in the proceedings of entire environment [*cf.* Słopecki 2013]. These principles are the foundation of martial arts and as such should be internalized by the instructors. The interview shows traditionalist approach to the way of martial arts.

CONCLUSIONS

Hierarchy of values professed by the given *sensei* affect the recognition axiology of martial arts. *Budo*, as a way of studying these martial arts, may be slightly different in terms

of technical, ethical and teleological, depending on the views of school grand master. Differences may occur within the same martial art, as *jujutsu*.

Jan Słopecki shows a traditionalist approach to the way of martial arts. He sees the value of *jujutsu*, among others, in observance of ethical principles. Then *jujutsu* study becomes an educational system. Scientific principle of theory and methodology training are added to this way. Jujutsu is the way for life, also for the improvement of humanity.

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