

FENCING IN SELF-DEFENCE

Wojciech J. CYNARSKI

Faculty of Physical Education, University of Rzeszow, Rzeszow, Poland

Keywords:

- martial arts,
- hopology,
- historical weapons,
- self-defence

Abstract:

Background and Problem. This work was prepared in the scientific framework of the hopology and theoretical conception of the “self-defence”. The aim is description and assessment of historical fencing (European, Japanese and others) – how it is useful for self-defence today.

Method. The main method is longitudinal participant observation, and – additionally – analysis of the literature and direct interviews with 3 Grand Masters (experts, on level 9-10 dan).

Results. In many martial arts historically were taught combat with weapon, and today is increasingly emphasized close combat - for self-defence. Still, they are taught technical forms of weapons.

Conclusions. The complete fighter should be able to become different types of conventional weapons. It does not translate directly into skills in a situation of self-defence "on the street." However, even today skills in fencing gives a man a greater repertoire of techniques, which can use in self-defence to respond to the attack of attacker or attackers.

INTRODUCTION

“The art of **self-defence** (Jap. *goshinjutsu*) is a derivative of fighting arts. It has been changing throughout the years together with the modifications of threats in social life. In the past, it used to be an assault with stabbing or melee a weapon, therefore, fencing skills determined survival. Nowadays, the term refers to hand-to-hand fighting, including the staff and knife fighting, etc. However, the art of self-defence has its own characteristics; It is not merely the sum of skills borrowed from *jujutsu* or other martial arts / combat sports.” [Cynarski 2016].

Self-defence is associated primarily on melee combat, that is, without the use of weapons [André 1905; Ambrozy 2002-2003]. And so it is understood from about a hundred years. Meanwhile, in the course of history the primary means of repelling any attack it was fencing and skills of wielding diverse, traditional weapons.

Originally a sword or sabre were weapons usable knight or nobleman, or the Japanese *bushi* called *samurai*. The same Japanese nobleman used *tachi* sword or sabre *uchigatana*, commonly called a *katana*, and a shorter blade - *wakizashi*. Possession of a white weapon - *kenjutsu* - was the basis for training fighter until the nineteenth century [Cynarski 2013b].

Only when the warrior (European knight or *bushi*) did not want to kill the attacker, he used to repel the attack stick or just bare hands. Or when he was forced to do by an exceptional situation. However, having at the side of the weapon meant that in self-defence (in case of attack the bandits) defended a sword or other weapon as well.

Historically speaking, the basic tool, used as a dummy weapon acute in learning fencing or as a readily available folk weapon, was a stick. Extremely celebrity was fencing on sticks

(six feet in length) developed by Buddhist monks from the Shaolin Temple. To this day about the resort Shaolin are practiced forms of 18 traditional weapons [Shahar 2008].

This article was prepared in the scientific framework of the hopology and theoretical conception of the "self-defence" [Cynarski 2013a, 2016]. The problem and aim is escription and assessment of historical fencing (European, Japanese and others): How it is useful for self-defence today?

The main method is longitudinal participant observation of the author (over 30 years), and – additionally – analysis of the literature [Krippendorf 2004] and direct interviews with 3 Grand Masters (experts, on level 9-10 dan / master degrees).

RESULTS

1. Knights fighting and historical fencing

Today it is cultivated German school of sword fencing [Schroeber 1938; Schmidt 2007; Walczak 2011]. They practice in this way: the brotherhood of knights, a group of reconstructive and players/athletes recently developed sport under the name of "fighting knights" [Cynarski, Chala 2015]. In parallel train enthusiasts of historical Polish sabre [Zablocki 2011; Sawicki 2011, 2012].

Although this historical fencing contained, as a martial art, additional technical tricks and kicks, but for nearly a century has lost its usefulness in self-defence. When previously it was used to defend the country, family and individual self-defence, in the years 1920-1939 it was only used in duels. The choice was a sword or rapier [Boziewicz 1919/2012]. Sabre was still an attribute of an officer, but rather for decoration.

Perhaps the players of 'medieval fighting' / 'medieval combat' and specialists of hussar sabre are so fit that in most situations of self-defence they could cope by using a substitute e.g. stick, umbrella or walking stick, but in the present circumstances the defence required to cope in different positions and distances, and in unusual situations (e.g. a narrow space, like in an elevator).

Historical fencing was an elite martial art reserved for knights and nobles. Today it is cultivated by enthusiasts, regardless of social origin, but most often by descendants of noble families. While the sport fencing is practiced primarily for the sport, according to research the motivation of young people in this discipline [Szajna, Cynarski 2015], not for self-defence.

Significantly, three representatives of the schools of historical fencing started adventure with combat sports and martial arts from their various forms: Wojciech Zablocki - from sport fencing, Bill Newman - of Wing Chun *kung-fu*, and Zbigniew Sawicki - from Kyokushin *karate*. Maybe this is a kind of complement education model of ancient warriors.

2. Kenjutsu and kendo

Similarly to the European historical fencing is presented situation in old Japanese *kenjutsu*. For example, in the school Tenshinshoden Katorishinto-ryu is practiced (from the fifteenth century to the present) possession of sabres (*uchigatana* and *kodachi*), glaive *naginata* and long stick, and the technique of "manual" *jujutsu* practiced only as a supplement [cf. Sugino, Ito 2010]. One form of *iaido* this school illustrates a situation when someone wants to pull out of the sheath our sword, and then how to react. Forms weapon against weapons are practiced pairs the same as in the fifteenth century. This is the kind of fossils from the Japanese Middle Ages.

In today's sports *kendo* only 5 attack techniques are improved, but trained for years a sense of distance and timing can be useful in various situations of self-defence. In addition, fencing, also the Western sports fencing, teach to anticipate the opponent's attack.

Iaijutsu and *iaido* forms teach a defence in case of attack one or several attackers. We defend then with *kenjutsu* techniques. In turn, in the teaching by GM Lothar Sieber *kenjutsu*

includes, among others, kicking techniques, or self-defence without drawing the weapon [Sieber, Grzywacz 2015]. From the perspective of long-term observation the author argues that the only weapons training exercise does not give full, real skills in self-defence and "street" fight in the realities of the twenty-first century.

3. Escrima – Philippine fencing

Escrima is a Spanish term for fencing, but was adopted as the name of the Philippine martial arts. There are also other names for Philippine schools and fighting styles (*arnis, doce pares, kali*). *Escrima* actually refers to the techniques of Spanish fencing [Cynarski 2004], but contains its own weapons (knives, machetes, sticks and batons) and teaches fighting with hands and feet (interception, levers, hitting, kicking).

As a hundred years ago, so today *escrima* focuses on the real situation, when we were attacked with a knife or stick, and we have to fight for our life. Knowledge of Philippine teachers creatively develop their students. Exemplification of this phenomenon is the school of GM Bill Newman, who based on the techniques of GM René Latosa, and has developed his educational system, enriching *escrima* of historical weapons from the European tradition of chivalry [Newman 2005]. He shows his school as a school of real self-defence [Newman 2005: 233-256].

Here we can formulate the next, following thesis: in the range of realistic self-defence skills the best preparing give so-called comprehensive / complete systems, i.e. teaching martial in different distances and positions, with traditional weapons, against weapons and close combat.

CONCLUSIONS. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In many martial arts combat weapon was historically taught, and today is increasingly emphasized the close combat - just for self-defence [*cf.* Tokarski 1989; Tanaka 2003; Cynarski 2013b]. Still, they are taught here technical forms of weapons. Muai Thai combines tradition Krabi-krabong, WingTsun *kung-fu* teaches techniques with long pole and butterfly swords, in *wushu* is used department is *mohai* techniques - white weapons, Okinawan *kobudo* is practiced, as "armed" part of *karate*, etc. The complete fighter should be able to wield a weapon, whether it is long or short. Also today, fencing skills give man a greater repertoire of techniques, which can respond to the attack of attacker or attackers.

SOURCES

Direct interviews with Grand Masters: Bill Newman (10 master degree, *escrima*), Wojciech Zablocki (10 master degree, Polish sabre fencing), Zbigniew Sawicki (9 master degree, Polish sabre fencing).

REFERENCES

1. Ambrozy T. (2002-2003), *Self-defence and recreation*, "Ido – Ruch dla Kultury / Movement for Culture", vol. 3, pp. 61-64.
2. André E. (1905), *A hundred ways to repel the assault street without weapons*, "Przegląd Powszechny", Warsaw [in Polish].
3. Boziewicz W. (1919/2012), *Kodeks honorowy. Ogólne zasady postępowania honorowego*, Bona, Krakow [in Polish].
4. Cynarski W.J. (2004), *O sztuce szermierki. Uwagi o szermierce klasycznej*, "Ido – Ruch dla Kultury / Movement for Culture", vol. 4, pp. 29-42.
5. Cynarski W.J. (2013a), *The traditional art of swordmanship and its application today. A case study of one of the Japanese schools* [in:] M. Zvonar, Z. Sajdlova [eds.], *Conference: 9th International Conference on Sport and Quality of Life*, Masaryk Univ, Fac Sports Studies, Brno, Nov. 07-08, 2013, pp. 209-216.

6. Cynarski W.J. (2013b), *The training of a warrior following the teaching of the classical Japanese and Korean schools of martial arts (C14 – C19th)*, “Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology”, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 1-10.
7. Cynarski W.J. (2016), *The meaning of self-defence: an expert definition. A contribution to the theory of self-defence and combat* [in:] M. Zvonar, Z. Sajdlova [eds.], *Proceedings of 10th International Conference on Kinanthropology "Sport and Quality of Life"*, MU, Brno, Nov. 18-20, 2015, pp. 463-474.
8. Cynarski W.J., Chala J. (2015), *Zamki i turnieje: Turystyka pasjonatów kultury militarnej Europy*, “Turystyka Kulturowa”, vol. 6, no. 6, pp. 21-35.
9. Krippendorff J. (2004), *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
10. Newman W. (2005), *Escrima*, Wushu-Verlag Kernspecht, Burg/Fehmarn [in German].
11. Sawicki Z. (2011), *Polish Martial Art – Signum Polonicum*, “Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology”, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 38–46.
12. Sawicki Z. (2012), *Traktat szermierczy o sztuce walki polską szablą husarską. Part 2, W obronie Ewangelii*, Signum Polonicum, Zawiercie [in Polish].
13. Schmidt H. (2007), *Schwertkampf. Der Kampf mit dem langen Schwert nach der Deutschen Schule*, Wieland Verlag, Bad Aibling [in German].
14. Schroeber M. (1938), *Deutsche Fechtkunst*, Georg Roenig Buchdruckerei u. Verlag, Berlin [in German].
15. Shahar M. (2008), *The Shaolin Monastery. History, Religion, and the Chinese Martial Arts*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu.
16. Sieber L., Grzywacz R. (2015), *Jubilee of Shibu Kobudo in Poland 1995–2015*, “Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology”, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 13–25; doi: 10.14589/ido.15.4.2.
17. Sugino Y., Ito K. (2010), *Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto Ryu Budo Kyohan*, (trans. Ulf Rott) Demond GmbH Norderstedt [in German].
18. Szajna G., Cynarski W.J. (2015), *Motywy i uwarunkowania wyboru szermierki przez polskich szpadzistów* [w:] M. Zowislo, J. Kosiewicz [eds.], *Sport i turystyka w zwierciadle wartości społecznych*, AWF, Krakow, pp. 533-544 [in Polish].
19. Tanaka F. (2003), *Samurai fighting arts: the spirit and the practice*, Kodansha International.
20. Tokarski S. (1989), *Sztuki walki. Ruchowe formy ekspresji filozofii Wschodu*, Glob, Szczecin.
21. Walczak B. (2011), *Bringing lost teachings back to life – a proposed method for interpretation of Medieval and Renaissance fencing manuals*, “Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology”, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 47-54.
22. Zablocki W. (2011), *Szable świata*, Bosz Bellona, Warsaw [in Polish].