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100 years of Ju-jitsu : From "Sokół" through scouting, the army, and police for health and defense in present Poland

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100 years of Ju-jitsu. From „Sokół” through scouting, the army, and police for health and defense in present Poland

Abstract:

The failure of Polish insurrection in 1863 caused despair, moral and spiritual decay, and lack of hope of independence in the Polish nation.¹ During that time the idea of “Polish Sokół” came to life as an offshoot of the Czech “Sokół” movement. As a result, the organization was created in Lwów in 1867 and by the end of World War I the movement had its units (“nests”) in all parts of Poland.²

The basic aims of this society were promotion of gymnastics and national revival in all parts of partitioned Poland. The group’s goal was to develop fitness, both physically and mentally and to prepare young Poles to fight against aggressors.³ Some thought the „Sokół” society was created only to make Poland an independent country⁴.

Similarities and coincidence of historical and cultural context to Okinawa, Japan can be found. This city was also occupied by an aggressor resulting in the creation of martial arts. People of Okinawa didn’t have any weapons to defend against enemies leading to the birth of a new technique which helped them to fight effectively.

¹ M.Terech, *Zarys dziejów sokolstwa polskiego*, Warszawa 1932, s.5.

² J.Snopko, *Polskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne Sokół w Galicji (1867-1918)*.

³ G.Bielec, *Elementy sportów walki w programie działalności Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół”*[W:] *Szkice z działalności Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” (1867-2006)*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego 2009, s.38.

⁴ M.Wolańczyk, *Macierz Sokola w 60-letnim rozwoju(1867-1927)*, Lwów 1927, s.1.

Key words:

Insurrection, independence, martial arts, aggressor, martial arts, Sokół movement.

The over 140 year old gymnastic society „Sokół” (Falcon) is a very interesting and complex subject to reflect on. The original view on defense during the time of partitions in Poland presented Grzegorz Bielec in an article: *“Elementy sportów walki w programie działalności Towarzystw Gimnastycznych „Sokół” (1867-1914).*⁵ The Union of Gymnastic Societies „Sokół” is known as the cradle of present day sport and its history coincides with Olympic movement.

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⁵ S.Zaborniak,P.Król,*Szkice z działalności Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” (1867-2006)*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego 2009, s. 37-50.

⁶ M.Terech, *Zarys dziejów sokolstwa polskiego*, Warszawa 1932,s.5.

⁷ J.Snopko, *Polskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne Sokół w Galicji (1867-1918)*.

⁸ G.Bielec, *Elementy sportów walki w programie działalności Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół”*[W:] *Szkice z działalności Towarzystwa Gimnastycznego „Sokół” (1867-2006)* , Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego 2009, s.38.

⁹ M.Wolańczyk, *Macierz Sokola w 60-letnim rozwoju(1867-1927)*, Lwów 1927, s.1.

As we analyze the first combat systems in “Sokół” we have to underline an important role of general gymnastic preparation as a foundation of all other preparations.¹⁰ „Sokół system” in Lwów by Antoni Durski in 1881, contained twelve divisions with groups of exercises among which four were typical defense martial arts.¹¹ Division one (exercises without weapon) contained military type training drills. Division three (exercises with co-partner who resisted) contained six groups: 1. Resist exercises, 2. Grapple exercises, 3. Fighting, 4. Wrestling, 5. Fencing, and 6. Wrestling and fencing together. Division four contained exercises without any instruments but with different accessories like canes, balls, knives etc.). Division six contained exercises with instruments (fencing training with cold steel, wrestling and some elements of today's kick-boxing).¹²

Wrestling and fencing became mandatory during sport competitions organized by “Sokół” in 1891, 1892, 1898, 1900, and 1909.¹³ Thousands of sportsmen took part in these games.¹⁴ Exercises and martial arts which represented 25 % of all activities in „Sokół” were an excellent foundation for new soldiers in preparation for combat during World War I and II.

In 19th century, wrestling became one of the most popular sports in Europe. Contestants gained in popularity, wealth, and sometimes knighthood (in Turkey a winner became an aristocrat).¹⁵ In 1897 Polish-language studies on wrestling, authors glorified the great values of this sport which has influence on body as well as on spirit. Large involvement of all muscles puts wrestling on the top of all sports. Constant body movement helps to achieve strength, agility and speed.¹⁶

¹⁰ Zob. Z. Bil, J. Rybiński, *100 lat ruchu gimnastycznego w Polsce*, Warszawa 1967, s. 20.

¹¹ „Przewodnik Gimnastyczny >>Sokół<<”, Lwów 1881-1914 (dalej: PGS), R. 1, 1881, nr 1, s. 4-5.

¹² Tamże.

¹³ PGS 1891, R XI, s. 51, PGS 1892, R XII, s. 63, „Przegląd Gimnastyczny” (dalej PG), Kraków (1897-1901) 1898, s. 128-129, PG 1900, s. 229, PGS 1909, R XXIX, s. 12 i 41.

¹⁴ Przykład V Jubileuszowego Złotu Sokolego w Krakowie w 1910 r. gdzie wzięło udział 3343 druhow i 640 druhen.

¹⁵ R. Grzegorz, M. Walendowicz, *Historia Ju-jitsu w Polsce*, AWF Poznań, s. 24.

¹⁶ Zob. S. Ruciński, Z. Wyrobek, *Zapasy na tułów i ramiona*, Dodatek do Przeglądu

Aside from classic wrestling, in the beginning of 20th century Eugeniusz Piasecki popularized a new and better fighting style. It was Japanese wrestling called jiu-jitsu. As a boxing expert, Piasecki saw jiu-jitsu in England on August 7, 1907 presented by Mrs. Watts. He then published articles on jiu-jitsu in the monthly magazine "Sokół" in Lwów.¹⁷

In 1908 in another magazine "Muzeum", Piasecki reviewed three books by H. J. Hancock, Mrs. Watts, and G. W. Baldamo *The Fine Art of Jujitsu*, where he praised ju-jitsu as an excellent fitness activity which was also Physical Education in Japan. Piasecki explained that jiu-jitsu contains a very rational philosophy of personal hygiene. Washing the whole body with cold water helps to become healthier. In addition, light digestible foods such as rice, fish and vegetables strengthen the body.¹⁸

During the following years Piasecki also wrote about English scouting in *Harce młodzieży polskiej*. In his article, the author refers to the great time of knights in Poland and recalls the patriotic spirit. He encouraged young people to practice jiu-jitsu.¹⁹ Piasecki wrote: „Among many skills which the Scouts ought to achieve ... there should be also jiu-jitsu”.²⁰ The Scouts have to be extremely fit by first practicing old Polish "palcaty" (cane fencing), then French boxing, and finally Japanese jiu-jitsu.²¹ Piasecki encouraged young people to read a book *Japoński system trenowania ciała by Hancock*.²² Ultimately, jiu-jitsu became well known before World War I, however; the sport was not popularized in many places in the divided by aggressors Poland.

Popularised in Poland, was a General, and a writer Robert Baden-Powell, the author of *Skauting dla młodzieży*. In this translation of his book it is confirmed that „Jiu-jitsu is in demand in English schools but in Poland is

Gimnastycznego, Kraków 1897, s.1-2.

¹⁷ R. Grzegorz, M. Walendowicz, *Historia Ju-jitsu w Polsce*, AWF Poznań, s.69.

¹⁸ Tamże, s.74.

¹⁹ M.Schreiber, E.Piasecki, *Harce młodzieży polskiej*, Lwów 1912, s.197.

²⁰ Tamże

²¹ Tamże.

²² R. Grzegorz, M. Walendowicz, *Historia Ju-jitsu w Polsce*, AWF Poznań, s.75.

rarely practiced”.²³ In this book Baden-Powell also mentions Japanese rules of bushido with jiu-jitsu elements.

In 1905 in Warsaw a French writer Emil Andre published his book *100 sposobów samoobrony od napaści ulicznej*.²⁴ Andre was a publisher and an expert of Swedish gymnastics, martial art called canne²⁵, as well as wrestling, boxing and French jiu-jitsu expert. Andre collaborated with other sport experts including Julian Leclerc and his son George (boxing), Francis Le Bordelaise (wrestling), and Katsukuma Higashi (ju-jitsu). In 1906 and 1908 translations of two books by H. I. Hancock were published: *Japoński system fizyczny trenowania ciała dla kobiet* and *Japoński system fizyczny trenowania ciała dla młodzieży*.²⁶

The first one convinces its readers about the possibility of beating a man by a woman who knows jiu-jitsu. Practicing jiu-jitsu systematically helps to keep one's body fit. In his second book Hancock encouraged the placement of jiu-jitsu in school programs. „Six weeks of jiu-jitsu will bring better results than the same time spent in gym during the whole year”, he wrote. He also stated that youths should practice jiu-jitsu not only during middle or high school but also in college and later throughout the lifespan.²⁷

In his book *Źródło zdrowia, siły i zręczności* published in Lwów in 1907, and then as a second edition in 1909 with a different title as *Dźiu-Dżitsu, czyli źródło zdrowia, siły i zręczności*, Zygmunt Kłośnik praised Japanese energy which is a source of strength and flows from ju-jitsu. The author stated that jiu-jitsu is a perfect personal defense system.²⁸

The beginning of World War I had a negative impact on the development of martial art. After the Proclamation of independence in 1918, Eugeniusz Piasecki again started writing about Physical Education connected with jiu-

²³ R. Baden -Powell, *Skauting dla młodzieży*, Warszawa-Kraków 1913, s.133.

²⁴ E.Andre, *100 sposobów samoobrony od napaści ulicznej*, Warszawa 1905.

²⁵ Forma walki za pomocą kija.

²⁶ H.I.Hancock, *Japoński system fizyczny trenowania ciała dla kobiet*, *Japoński system fizyczny trenowania ciała dla młodzieży*, Warszawa 1906 i 1908.

²⁷ Tamże.

²⁸ Tamże.

jiu-jitsu elements. He compiled this information on jiu-jitsu in a textbook for teachers, headmasters and school physicians and his influence helped to bring jiu-jitsu to schools.²⁹

Physical education with Japanese jiu-jitsu was present not only in schools but also in police training and the Army. In 1919, Władysław Osmólski and Eugeniusz Piasecki created the Department of PE in War Office. One of the PE inspectors from Copenhagen stated that in terms of PE, Poland stands higher than any other country, except Sweden. It is likely due to the cooperation between PE and the Army.³⁰ Jiu-jitsu became a part of practicing hand to hand fight in the Army.

The first instructors in the Army were Henryk Jeziorowski and Stanisław Szczepkowski. Szczepkowski compiled a book for police titled *Gimnastyka Policyjna*, and Jeziorowski authored the best book on ju-jitsu in 1930's: *Walka wręcz jiu-jitsu*.

During interwar period jiu-jitsu had enough followers to become a sport. Some of the competitions were organized in Germany. At that time the rules were set: competition = fighting on the ring 5x5 meters wide, four rounds, and five minutes. The one who gives up says "stop" or hits the ring three times. Maximum grip time is 20 second.³¹

In a different book by Józef Jungrow titled *Wychowanie fizyczne w wojsku*, the author noticed that exercises during knife fight were borrowed from ju-jitsu.³² Another statement says that jiu-jitsu helps a weak competitor to win over the stronger one.³³ In 1931, the National Police Headquarters allowed the issue of a textbook *Zasady walki wręcz (ju-jitsu)*, by Czesław Adam Strączek.

In order to sum up interwar period we have to say that jiu-jitsu was used to train the Army, the Police, the Scouts and "Sokół" societies. One of the most famous instructors of that time was Kazimierz Laskowski – author of *Samoo-*

²⁹ E.Piasecki, *Wychowanie fizyczne*, [W:] Higiena Szkolna, Kraków 1921, s.191.

³⁰ K.A.Knudsen, *Wrażenia z pobytu w Polsce*, Wychowanie Fizyczne, 1926, zeszyt 3 s.156.

³¹ *Nowoczesna Encyklopedia Ilustrowana AZ*, M. Arcta, Warszawa 1938, s.308.

³² J.Jungrow, *Wychowanie fizyczne w wojsku*. Warszawa 1924, s.66.

³³ Ibidem, s.107-108.

brona w 17 chwytach.³⁴ Practicing jiu-jitsu by different groups of people was one of the forms which helped to prepare Poles to fight against Nazis during World War II.

Immediately after the War ended and a new nationhood was being built, jiu-jitsu wasn't very vivid. It was not until the 50's when the jiu-jitsu idea returned. In 1947 Marian Skierczyński started self-defense and jiu-jitsu in the College of Physical Education in Warsaw.³⁵ The college also organized jiu-jitsu shows. Another famous activist was Czesław Borejsz, the manager of the Department of self-defense and athletics. In 1951, Tadeusz Kochanowski who had just graduated became coach of jiu-jitsu, self-defense, and judo.³⁶ In 1956, judo as a section of GKKF became a part of European Judo Union.

In 1957, the Association of Polish Judo was born and its first chairman was Tadeusz Kochanowski. The first tournament took place in 1954. At that time jiu-jitsu was a great compliment of judo. But in 1973 Polish Judo Association made a decision to separate judo from jiu-jitsu. In 1983 there was the first national conference of jiu-jitsu instructors.³⁷

In 1985 the National Council of Jiu-Jitsu instructors came into being. In 1988 Krzysztof Kondratowicz with his students founded the Polish Center of Jiu-jitsu which changed in 1989 into Polish Center of Jiu-jitsu Goshin Ryu. The Center as the first in Poland received its certification from Japan.³⁸

On January 1, 1993 in Jaworzyna the Polish Jiu-jitsu Association was established. Since 1997 competitors participate in many different international tournaments including the World Championship.³⁹ It is a result of long lasting efforts of many instructors, coaches and enthusiasts of jiu-jitsu.

Likewise, Eugeniusz Piasecki before World War I and during interwar period popularized jiu-jitsu in Poland and Krzysztof Kondratowicz continued the development of this noble martial art. He is the biggest doyen of Polish

³⁴ K.Kondratowicz, *Jiu-jitsu sztuka walki obronnej*, Warszawa 1991, s.45-46.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, s.46.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, s.47.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, s.52.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, s.55.

³⁹ S.Sterkowicz, T. Ambroży *Ju-jitsu sportowe: proces szkolenia*, Kraków 2003, s.9.

jiu-jitsu. His 65 year old academic and training activity is for each one of us an example of dedication and great passion.

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