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## Taxonomy of combatives as it is seen from Tyrš tradition in the Czech Republic / Taksonomia form walki z perspektywy tradycji Tyrša w Czechach

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The aim of this piece of work is presenting the nature of combatives taxonomy as it is seen from Tyrš tradition in the Czech Republic. Dr. Miroslav Tyrš was a co-founder of SOKOL movement and creator of extraordinary terminology of physical education which is still used in both of the Czech and Slovak Republic. In this article we described taxonomy of combatives. It comes out from Tyrš's work but it is builded according to today's combative realities. The systems of combatives derived from a hierarchy of three levels, preparatory combatives, combative sports, and self-defence, respectively. The three levels are relatively independent although there is some overlap between them. Taxonomy of combatives is valuable also as a didactics tool.

### Introduction

There is different evolution of terminology in various languages. Nowadays we use English as a universal language for common and scientific communication as well. It is important to know, that terminology in each country have had different evolution depending on specific historical conditions.

Combatives (úpoly in Czech) are in Czech and Slovak language linked with Dr. Miroslav Tyrš, founder of SOKOL movement.

The statute of SOKOL (19<sup>th</sup> century) is the recognised and documented starting point for the incorporation of the combatives into physical education here in the Czech Republic.

Tyrš, a philosopher and intellectual, seems to be the one who created the system of physical exercises for the newly established "SOKOL" association [Tyrš 1873].

The basic criterion for the physical exercises was that it was possible to perform them either individually without help or with a partner and his/her support or resistance. Both the types of exercises can be performed with or without props.

The exercises were divided into:

- I. Exercises without props and without support of other people
- II. Exercises with props
- III. Group exercises
- IV. Combatives.

Combatives (úpoly in Czech), as the fourth group of the system of exercises were further divided into two main classes and other subclasses (all the other groups of the system of exercises used the same division key):

A. without props:

1. *Opposition* (resistance, pulling, pushing): without props, with props. The aim is to overcome the opponent's resistance knowing the direction of resistance as well as knowing the activity in advance.

2. *Wrestling* (bowing, lifting, pull-downs, knock-downs, etc.): as you see this not only means resisting the opponent but also defeating them, taking them down to the floor to prevent them from putting up further meaningful resistance.
3. *Boxing* (arm attacks, kicks, defensives). The core lies in the attack with arms or legs as well as in blocking the opponent's attacks.

#### B. Fencing with weapons:

1. *sabre*
2. *foil*
3. *short or quarter staff*: short (80–100 cm), long (up to the fighter's chin – a wooden stick, which is thicker on one end and thinner on the other end),
4. *bayonet*,
5. *dagger*.

The French fencing school provided the basis for work with a variety of weapons in a SOKOL system.

The specific naming units have to be understood in the context of the time period of their origin. Wrestling, for example, differed enormously from the current understanding of sport combat either in free or in Greco-Roman style. If we do not take account of the combat rules of the day, we could assess the Sokol style of combat to be something like free-style wrestling with elements of ju jitsu. Boxing included a variety of techniques of strikes with the fist and arm, leg strikes as well as defending techniques (blocks), swerves, etc. No doubt, Tyrš in time his study in French carefully watched possibility for doing exercises. We can see similarities in SOKOL's boxing and fencing with staff and French savate.

It is known that Tyrš invented many neologisms when creating his Sokol exercise system. It is understandable, as he did not have the language to describe individual exercises. He created and adapted about 800 neologisms by which he significantly enriched first Czech and later also Slovak general usage. This seems to be the reason why it is so difficult to translate these expressions into foreign languages (e.g. English).

In the next nearly one and half century many physical educators developed theory and practice of combatives. We have to mention Smotlacha [1938], Vítězka [1973], Roubíček [1980], Fojtík [1984], Ďurech [2000, 2002 et al.] and in current years also Bartík [1999, 2006, 2007 et al.], Vít [2005], Reguli [2005, 2007], etc.

Now we use taxonomy of combatives as it is defined in Reguli [2005].

#### **Definition of combatives**

Combatives (úpoly in Czech) are physical exercises aimed at the physical defeat of a partner. Combatives comprise specific exercises, which prepare a participant to overcome a partner by physical contact.

#### **Combatives taxonomy**

Combatives are a phenomenon of many dimensions and they go beyond mere sport, however broad the definition of such. In fact the question of combatives cannot simply be reduced to mere physical movements. We will endeavour to put the individual exercises into a systematic structure. It is known that no system is of absolute value; it should serve only as a tool to aid in the understanding of certain phenomena, i.e. providing a realistic context for fighting.

The systems of combatives derived from a hierarchy of three levels, as you can see below:

### Combatives taxonomy

1. level of combatives pre-requisites

#### Preparatory combatives



2. level of combatives systems

#### Combative sports



3. level of combatives application

#### Self-defence

Fig. 1. Combatives taxonomy / Ryc. 1. Taksonomia form walki

The first level is the level of combatives pre-requisites. It comprises of the simplest combative activities (movement activities in contact with one or more partners), which are the necessary pre-requisite for the next two levels. The content is the basic fighting technique needed for all the fighting activities (posture, guard, falls...). These activities are preparation and basics and we call them preparatory combatives.

The second level involves individual combative systems. Each of them is a comparatively independent unit and it fulfils the criteria of an independent combative branch. We call them combative sports and we can further subdivide them. The level of combative systems is the greatest and most important part of combatives.

The third level is the level of applied combative activities to be used in necessary self-defence with appropriate legal, ethical, social and other norms. This category is somewhat separate from the system of combative sports as it is closely linked with other, especially technical indicators that fall outside the field of sport (especially with the usage of firearms and other weapons).

The three levels are relatively independent although there is some overlap between them. Therefore, it is difficult to categorise all the individual exercises in combatives, as they can fall into more than one category.

### Combatives

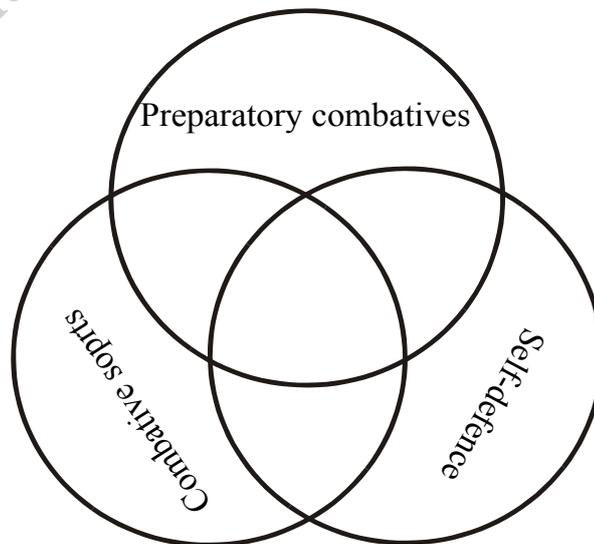


Fig. 2. Relationship and overlap of combatives levels / Ryc. 2. Związki i zachodzenie na siebie form walki

The following figure shows a brief summary of all the combatives systems. The later text speaks of their individual elements.

## COMBATIVES

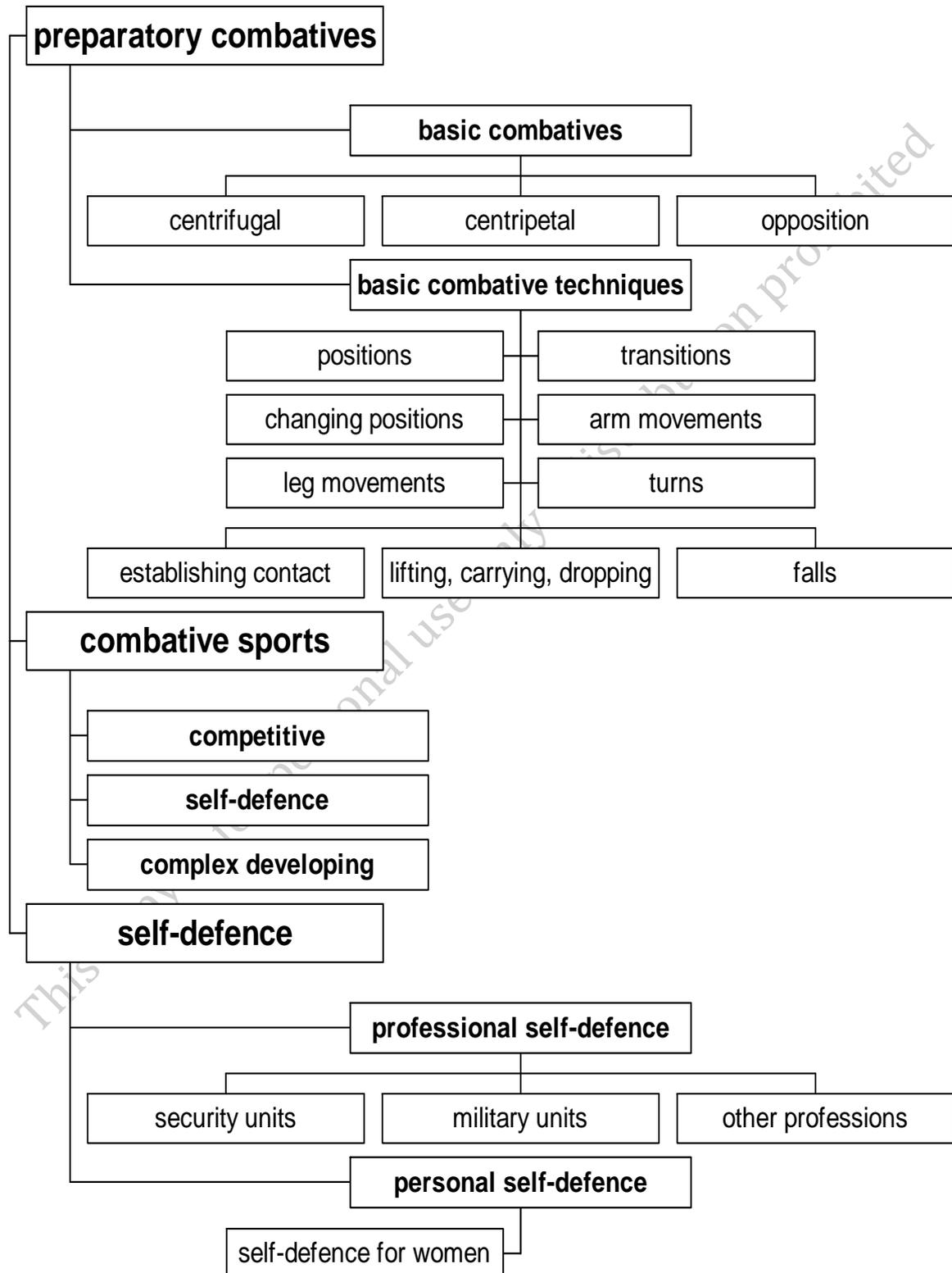


Fig. 3. Overview of combatives / Ryc. 3. Przegląd form walki

## **The level of combative pre-requisites: preparatory combatives**

Preparatory combatives are relatively simple exercises, which can be practised independently from all other fighting exercises. They are successfully used within school physical education at all levels and types of schools and institutions as well as free-time physical education. They are also used for developing movement pre-requisites for individual combative sports and for self-defence. All combative systems are in fact systems of highly polished techniques of specialised pulling (centrifugal movements), pushing (centripetal movements) or oppositions in a proper posture and making effective contact with appropriate movements of upper and lower extremities, torso, and so on. Preparatory combatives are the basis for individual combative systems.

## **The level of combative system: combative sports**

The most frequently used terms for combative (and related) systems vary; the usual are combatives, combative sports, combative activities, non-lethal combatives, martial arts, martial ways, hand-to-hand fighting, fighting arts, etc. The nature of combatives taxonomy considers the most suitable to be combatives and sport or martial arts as these terms are closely related to the essence of the system. The term combative is linked not only with the physical exercises but also with the whole area of conducting a war and combat, meaning also the technical background of such. The term “arts” seems to be too broad and it seems to be only one way of looking at movement (the art of movement).

These are not only, as you can read in the European Charter, competitive activities (competitive sports) but all the movement activities, which should be frequently mentioned in order not to forget the fact. The individual sports (in the narrow sense of the term) differ from each other. They have their own:

- name (athletics, swimming, downhill skiing, ju jutsu),
- tools (technical, tactical, material),
- members and hierarchy,
- governing body and their system of national and regional organisations,
- methods and forms of training and education (more or less distinct, one from another),
- system of competitions and rules the competitive sports.

We also have to mention that not all the sports have all the listed attributes on the same level and some sports do not have even all the attributes. We use the combative sports for the level of combative systems. We can divide them according to various criteria. Individual groups define the aim they wish to achieve:

1. Competitive combative sports (wrestling, boxing, kendó, etc.). The main characteristic of the system of these competitions and the preparations for them is the objective of achieving the top performance in the competitions within the limits of their rules.
2. Self-defence combative sports (ju jutsu, goshin jutsu, krav maga etc.). Their main characteristic is focused on the application of combatives to the need for self-defence.
3. Complex developing combative sports (aikido, tai chi, etc.). Their main characteristic is their whole-life dimension and their development of a human being in more than one dimension, i.e. in the field of their body and soul, socially as well as spiritually.

## **Level of combatives applications: self-defence**

Self-defence is a beneficial movement activity, even though some combative sports or combative systems emphasise self-defence as their priority. Self-defence, being a specific mode of the self-preservation is one of the oldest drives in humanity.

In the past, almost all the combative systems seem to have been constructed as self-defensive. They were supposed to be used in wars or duels. The application function of the combative system in self-defence shows that self-defence that can be used in individual fields of professional use as well as personal use must be complex and individual, but still an open system. The

system should allow, on the basis of the circumstances (given by the participating individuals, situation, etc.), transformation of concrete fighting activities in such ways as to enable an adequate, effective and rapid self-defence, while respecting the limits of the law (preserving the person's life and health).

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**Słowa kluczowe: formy walki, taksonomia, wstępne formy walki, sporty walki, samoobrona**

## STRESZCZENIE

Celem niniejszej pracy jest zaprezentowanie charakteru taksonomii form walki widzianej z perspektywy tradycji Tyrsa w Czechach. Dr Miroslaw Tyrš był współtwórcą ruchu „Sokoła” i twórcą wyjątkowej terminologii z zakresu edukacji fizycznej, która nadal jest używana zarówno w Czechach, jak i Słowacji. W artykule opisana jest taksonomia form walki. Pochodzi ona z pracy Tyrsa, ale jest zbudowana według współczesnych realiów form walki. System form walki pochodzi z hierarchii trzech kolejnych poziomów, przygotowawcze formy walki, sporty walki i samoobrony. Te trzy poziomy są relatywnie niezależne, chociaż miejscami zachodzą na siebie. Taksonomia form walki jest także cennym narzędziem dydaktycznym.