

HISTORY

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Essay on the Polish Ju-Jitsu Association’s history (1993–2018)

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Abstract

Background. Sport *ju-jitsu* is a relatively new combat sport which is seeking to be recognised as an Olympic discipline. *Polski Związek Ju-Jitsu (PZJJ)* – the Polish Ju-Jitsu Association was established in 1993.

Problem and aim. We are looking for an answer to the question: In what way has the Polish Ju-Jitsu Association developed as an institution over the last 25 years? The article is designed as a kind of case study focusing on the operation of this sports association during this period.

Method. The study applies, in complementary ways, the following methods of qualitative research: long-term participant observation, analysis of documents and review of the related literature, as well as an interview with a long-time chairperson. Broad discourse of the thematic sources and elaborations has also been taken into account.

Results. The enthusiasm of its activists made it possible for PZJJ to start operation and to survive its pioneering period. It managed to achieve a certain degree of institutional maturity as well as excellent results in the sport, owing to good organisation and coaching activities.

Conclusions. The results achieved in the sport speak in favour of the PZJJ. Institutional forms have been adopted from *judo*. On the other hand the Scientific Research Commission has been neglected. Furthermore, due to the lack of specialists in the original *jujutsu*, departures from the genuine Japanese tradition can be observed.

Introduction

Research into the history of *jujutsu* in Poland conducted previously did not focus on or paid insufficient attention to developments in *ju-jitsu* as a sport discipline as well as the related institutional developments [*cf.* Kondratowicz 1996; Grzegorz, Walendowicz 2008]. Apart from the published research limited to regional issues [*cf.* Cynarski 2004, 2007], there are no nationwide studies.

In Germany, the birth place of the competitive sport named *Ju-Jitsu*, there is also a shortage of comprehensive historical studies [*cf.* Renninghoff, Witte 1998; Hecke 2008]. Perhaps from the viewpoint of historical considerations the related timeline is too short. Majority of research publications discuss generally the history of *jujutsu* as a martial art, overlooking the sport discipline bearing the same name. The few exceptions include the study by Sterkowicz [1998; Cynarski 1999]. Some publications in fact refer to this sport discipline, yet they focus on such aspects as theory of training and selected issues

other than understanding of its history [*cf.* Sterkowicz, Ambrozy 2003; Ambrozy, Kedra 2007; Sterkowicz-Przybycien 2010; Ambrozy *et al.* 2014].

Far more attention in research has been dedicated to the process of institutionalisation in this young discipline, i.e. changes in sport rules [Cynarski 1997, 2007], establishment of new institutions for training/education and organisational development [Cynarski, Bajorek 2011; Cynarski 2012, 2017]. Such changes in regulations for sport fighting (what is acceptable, and how things are scored) affect the actual fight and preparation for the competition [Cynarski, Bujak, Rut 2001; Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2005; Ambrozy *et al.* 2015].

The 25-year history of the Polish Ju-Jitsu Association (*Polski Związek Ju-Jitsu – PZJJ*) provides material for comparing its operation, successes, failures with the functioning and accomplishments of other similar entities. Some organisations, e.g. the Polish Fencing Federation [Szajna, Cynarski 2018] and Polish Judo Association [Sikorski 2009], are far more advanced as institutions.

They have operated for 95 and 60 years, respectively, and represent Olympic disciplines. As a result they receive more funding and have greater opportunities for development.

The trend related to Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) led to the approval of *ne-waza* competition, i.e. fighting technique exclusively in lying, sitting or kneeling position, and acceptance of the clubs interested in a similar type of competition and in Brazilian *jujutsu*. In fact BJJ and MMA are frequently investigated in sport sciences, yet there is a scarcity of related historical studies [Glinska-Wlaz 2015, 2016; cf. Marinho *et al.* 2016; Chernozub *et al.* 2018; Coswig *et al.* 2018].

Let us follow the development of sport *ju-jitsu* in Poland, in chronological order, highlighting achievements of specific people, successes and problems [Toporowicz 1996]. The study applies, in a complementary way, the following methods of qualitative research: long-term participant observation [Emerson, Fretz, Show 2001], analysis of documents and review of the related literature, as well as an interview with a long-time chairperson. Broad discourse of the thematic sources and elaborations has been taken into account [Krippendorf 2004].

Sport ju-jitsu and its beginnings in Poland

Sport *jujutsu* evolved in Germany, in the community of people associated with *judo*, as an eclectic combat sport. This more comprehensive formula for sport competition was created, to include distance fighting, stand-up fighting, joint locks and ground techniques. This happened approximately in the 1980s. These rules are evolving. There are many types of sport *jujutsu*. One version is known as “JJIF Rules Sport Ju-Jitsu”, organised by JJIF – the Ju-Jitsu International Federation. It has been recognised as an official sport of the World Games since 1997. There are three main variants here: *Duo-system* (self-defence demonstration) where both the *tori* (attacker) and the *uke* (defender) come from the same team and demonstrate self-defence techniques; the *Fighting System (Free-fighting)* where competitors combine striking, grappling and submissions under rules which emphasise safety; and the *Japanese/Ne Waza* (grappling) system in which competitors start standing up and work for a submission, and striking is not allowed.

A pioneer of “sport *ju-jitsu*” in Poland was **Andrzej Trepte**, Eng. (6 dan) from Warsaw, where “Spartakus” Club, started by him, operated for a few years. He taught his own style of *goshin-jutsu* applying competitive approach to this martial art. W.J. Cynarski met him in 1986 during a *jujutsu* presentation in Ksawerow Club in Warsaw [Butrym 1986].

In 1992 the Silesian Ju-Jitsu Association (*Slaski Zwiasek Ju-Jitsu*) was launched. The first nationwide trainings for referees were organised, to be followed with compe-

titions. On 26 April 1992 the town of Myslowice hosted the Polish Show Tournament in Sport Ju-Jitsu. This association and the Polish Budo Association jointly endorsed the first Polish Championship in Sport Ju-Jitsu, held in Jaworzno in December 1992. *Sensei* Trepte was the main referee during the championships. Trepte was the first chairman of *Polski Zwiasek Ju-Jitsu* (PZJJ) established in 1993 in Katowice. On this occasion *sensei* Wojciech J. Cynarski made a presentation of martial arts, demonstrating the techniques of *aiki-jujutsu Daito-ryu* and *kobudo Tenshinshoden Katorishinto-ryu*.



Photo 1. At the table, second on the right Andrzej Trepte, main referee during 1992 Poland Championship [photo – W.J. Cynarski]

In March 1993 Cynarski organised a national training seminar and open tournament in sport *jujutsu* in Rzeszow. Idokan Poland Association (IPA) was launched. In Silesia the initiative towards establishing the PZJJ was started. The second Polish championship tournament was organised under the patronage of PZJJ (Sosnowiec, XI 1993) [cf. *Sportowe ...* 1999].

A different version of these events was presented by Michał Sliwka [s.a.] from Krakow:

“On **18 April 1993** the **Polish Ju-Jitsu Federation** organised the **First Polish Championship in Ju-Jitsu** in Jaworzno. The federation was a member and M. Sliwka was a representative of the World Ju-Jitsu Federation/ **WJFF** /, International Ju-Jitsu Federation/ **IJJF** /, European Ju-Jitsu Federation / **EJJF** /, **Yoseikan Budo** Federation of Master **Hiroo Mochizuki** and International University of Martial Arts / **IUMA** /, of Master **Keido Yamaue**. Later the Federation assigned its membership in IJJF and EJJF to **the Polish Ju-Jitsu Association**, and Michał Sliwka assigned his personal right to represent these federations to the-then chairman of **PZJJ**.” (original bold print highlights – as in the original at: <http://www.federacja.jujutsu.pl/jujutsuhist.html>).

In 2001 the Office for Physical Culture and Sport in Warsaw organised a meeting of the Council for Far Eastern Sports and Martial Arts. Polish *jujutsu* community was represented, inter alia, by S.A. Badenski (PZJJ) and

W.J. Cynarski (IPA). Polish authorities responsible for sports sought to encourage cooperation of the numerous organisations. Ultimately, however, the participants only presented information about their own activities and their own opinions [cf. Cynarski 2001].

Polski Związek Ju-Jitsu (PZJJ) / Polish Ju-Jitsu Association

Registration of PZJJ (November 1993) can mainly be credited to Leszek Siekanski, Eng. A witness to those events, Siekanski describes the association in the following way:

<< *Polski Związek Ju-Jitsu* was established on 31 January 1993 in Katowice. It is a sports association, as defined by Art. 10 of Physical Culture Act dated 18 January 1996 (*Dz.U. nr 23, poz. 113* as amended); in accordance with the Act this is the only organisation in Poland which is entitled to organise sport competitions in *ju-jitsu*, Polish championships in *ju-jitsu*, and to represent Poland abroad.

Polski Związek Ju-jitsu is a member of Ju-jitsu International Federation (JJIF) and Ju-jitsu European Union (JJEU). Starting from 1997, representatives of the association have participated in world and European championships and their achievements include the title of world champion, medals won during the events, team championship of the world, as well as European championship and medals. The association organises competitions in various ju-jitsu styles (*Fighting, Ne-Waza* and *Duo System*).

The dynamic growth of ju-jitsu, practised by both men and women, and significant achievements of representatives of Poland in international competitions reflect the maturity of this discipline. As a result in 2001-2002 the Academy of Physical Education in Krakow organised, for the first time in Poland, a course for grade 2 instructors in Ju-jitsu, which was completed by 25 participants. >>



Photo 2. Sensei Roman Witek (President of PZJJ), Leszek Siekanski and Jozef Gora. The sabre for sensei Bernaschewice [courtesy of the “Shogun” Myslowice club]



Photo 3. L. Siekanski, J. Bernaschewice (7 dan), referee of the competition (?), and A. Filus. Katowice, 1995 [courtesy of the “Shogun” Myslowice]



Photo 4. 8th Idokan Poland Cup in Jujutsu and Championships of South-East Poland in Rzeszow 2000 [courtesy of the “Shogun” Myslowice]

The first Board of PZJJ comprised: Andrzej Trepte – president, Leszek Siekanski and Leszek Szymiec – vice-presidents, Roman Witek – secretary, Stefan Andrzej Badenski, Andrzej Filus and Wojciech J. Cynarski – members. President Trepte awarded higher ranks to a group of Silesian instructors (without technical examinations). Sensei Cynarski was independent, owning ranks awarded by *shihan* L. Sieber (10 dan).



Photo 5. Tournament IPA in Rzeszow. On the mat, referee L. Siekanski [Cynarski’s own collection]



Photo 6. Tournament in Strzyzow '2003. Referee A. Grzeska [Cynarski's own collection]

In February 1995 A. Trepte resigned from the position of the president and withdrew from activity. During 1995 Championships of Poland in Katowice *sensei* J. Bernaschewice [photo 1-2] and W.J. Cynarski made presentations of martial arts. General Assembly was held. A new president was elected, i.e. **Roman Witek**, teacher of instructors from Katowice, Jaworzno and Myslowice. The newly elected vice-presidents were L. Siekanski (Myslowice) and a *judo* coach Marian Jasinski (Sosnowiec). The assembly also elected the Secretary General Jozef Gora (Oswiecim), chairman of Commission for Jujutsu Tradition – W.J. Cynarski (Rzeszow), chairman of the Referee Commission – Andrzej Filus (Myslowice), chairman of Referees' Council – S. Zdeb (Sosnowiec). On 16 December 1995, Rzeszow hosted the first international *jujutsu* tournament in Poland, i.e. the Third Idokan Poland Cup. Competitors from Sosnowiec ("Budowlani" Sport Club) won, and were followed by the Rzeszow Centre (R.O.) "Dojo Budokan" (2nd place) and "Seikai Judokai" from Moscow.



Photo 7. Competition in celebration of the 10th anniversary of IPA. Holding the microphone – mayor of the city of Strzyzow Tadeusz Marek, Strzyzow 2003 [Cynarski's own collection].

In April 1996 Przemysl hosted Championship of the Region, organised by Robert Wyskiel, the main referee was W.J. Cynarski (International Idokan Europe referee).

The R.O. "Dojo Budokan" won in the team classification. Cynarski repeatedly asked PZJJ for money needed for operations of the Commission for Jujutsu Tradition. He did not get even one penny, and was replaced in this position by Zenon Liszkiewicz from Krakow (from April 1996). The first money provided for research into *jujutsu* tradition was allocated to a training with the teacher J. Gory – J. Bernaschewice (1996).



Photo 8. Idokan Poland Cup for the team representing Rzeszow Centre "Dojo Budokan" coached by Cynarski. A presentation was held by students of this *sensei* – the team of *Shibu Kobudo* IPA [Cynarski's own collection].

Training sessions for referees were held in Katowice and Rzeszow. In November Cynarski passed the exam in Munich, to obtain 4 dan in *jujutsu Yoshin-ryu*. While L. Siekanski (vice-president of PZJJ) represented PZJJ during World Championships in Paris. Subsequently he became the vice-president of IPA.

Starting from 1997, JJIF regulations have been in force in PZJJ. On 14 June 1997 during Polish Senior Duo-system Championship in Oswiecim there was a strong competition between Silesian clubs and Idokan Poland Association. The only pair representing IPA (R. Wyskiel and T. Danko) won the second place. In August the same year, an International Practice in Jujutsu and Karate was held in Rzeszow; L. Sieber 10 dan provided training to *jujutsuka* from Germany, Poland and Russia. *Shihan* Sieber renounced sport competition [Borowiec 1997; MK 1997]. The same year the Board was joined by Jan Slopecki (Warszawa) and Andrzej Lewandowski (Zielona Gora). Referee trainings were held in Strzyzow and Sosnowiec. On 25 October 1997 the second international tournament was held, also in Rzeszow. On this occasion Polish Cup was held jointly with the 5th Idokan Poland Cup. The competitors were from Belarus, Poland and Russia. IPA organised several ju-jitsu tournaments [cf. photo 4-8].

On 4-5 April 1998 – Liszkiewicz organised a seminar with his teacher, *sensei* T. Riesser. Traditional techniques

were to provide inspiration in arrangements in *Duo-system*. In June the Commission for Jujutsu Tradition was suspended, or in fact terminated. On 22 Nov. 1998 gold medal of WC in Berlin in the category +94 kg (*Fighting*) was won by Dariusz Zimolag.

In February 1999 during a Board meeting in Katowice Cynarski criticised the policy of awarding dan ranks for sport results. 19 June 1999 during the Dan Council Seminar in Katowice (*dojo* of “Ippon” club) *sensei* Cynarski taught *Yori-no kata* and techniques of Japanese *kenjutsu*, and M. Jasinski provided instruction in *Nage-no kata*. Cynarski obtained the highest technical rank – 5 dan. The first referees to obtain international licences were Trepte, Cynarski, Tadeusz Ambrozy, and later Dr Jan Gniadek.

On 18 Sept. 1999 the General Assembly was held. The main Referee Commission was joined by A. Filus, G. Piwowar, W.J. Cynarski and M. Soroka. Presidential election was won by **Stefan A. Badenski** (Jaworzno). Cynarski suggested that Dan Council should consist of persons owning the highest technical ranks in various schools and styles of *jujutsu*. The proposal was not approved. The same year J. Slopecki received 8 dan certificate in PZJJ. At the time the Dan Council was chaired by the honorary president of PZJJ Roman Witek. Cynarski, who had been invited to IMAF WC in Tokyo, received a representative sport uniform from president Badenski [cf. Plezia 2000].

Year 2000. Dr *hab.* Stanislaw Sterkowicz received an honorary 6 dan rank from PZJJ. Cynarski’s students took part in an open tournament in Rzeszow, and won Idokan Poland Cup and the Championship of the Region [photo 3]. 25-26 Nov. 2000 – Polish representation participating in World Championship JJIF in Copenhagen were ranked at no. 9 in a group of 22 teams present. Cynarski made a suggestion to the Board that Academic Research Commission / Science Committee should be launched. There was no response.

On 30 May 2001 the Office for Physical Culture and Sport in Warsaw hosted a meeting of the Council for Far Eastern Sports and Martial Arts. Those in attendance included Badenski (PZJJ) and Cynarski (IPA). The meeting was aimed at consolidation of the community for the benefit of Polish sport. In August the same year a ju-jitsu competition, part of World Games, was held in Akita (Japan), and was attended by two contestants from Poland and two activists – Badenski (*president*) and Jasinski (team coach).

Cynarski worked as a volunteer on the Board and the commissions of the Association for 10 years – until 2003. He was awarded by PZJJ with Gold Badge, the highest distinction. Siekanski and Badenski are still involved in the Association; the latter for many years was its president (until 2014), and then has worked in international organisations. The function of the president in 2014 and 2015 was held by Tomasz Zakolski, instructor of UKS

“Wisla”. *Shihan* Roman Grzegorz from Glogow was trying to put order to matters related to the Dan Council; Science Committee was initiated by Dr *hab.* T. Ambrozy (yet it did not start to operate).

Some *sensei* (traditionalists) discontinued their involvement with PZJJ. On the other hand the Association opened up for the currently trendy *Brazilian jiu-jitsu* (Bjj) and Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). New centres joined the association and new competition disciplines evolved.

Since 2009, Poland has been among the world leaders in sports *jujutsu*. In 2015, JJIF World Championship was held in Bangkok and Poles won first place in medal count. In 2016 Polish team repeated the success, with even better results. 2016 Ju-Jitsu World Championship took place on 25-27 Nov. 2016 in Wroclaw, Poland. The new competitions included ‘duo show’ and ‘team mix’. Only one Polish referee (T. Zakolski) was authorised to oversee the fights. Polish athletes, however, won a total of five competitions, and a bag of 23 medals, including 11 gold. The competition was attended by 506 athletes from 42 countries (representing 49 teams), while the judges came from about 20 countries, mostly European. Russians ranked at number two, and French athletes at number three in medal count [cf. Badenski 2016; Cynarski 2017].

Tomasz Knap, originally associated with MMA has been the president of PZJJ since autumn 2015. With significant help from Wieslaw Blach, PhD, the former president of PZJudo, World JJIF Championship was for the first time organised in Poland (Wroclaw 2016). This was a great success in terms of organisation and sport achievements – Poland won in medal count [Cynarski 2017]. A year later Wroclaw hosted World Games 2017. T. Ambrozy was trying to put order to matters related to the Dan Council. Other matters, such as the Science Committee continue¹ to be unresolved.

Considerations, discussion and conclusions

The results achieved in the sport speak in favour of PZJJ. Polish *ju-jitsu* ranks among world leaders (No. 1 in medal count during Bangkok ‘2015 and Wroclaw ‘2016 World Championships). Following incorporation of MMA and BJJ (Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu) clubs² into PZJJ a number of new people joined the association, one of them being President T. Knap. On the other hand,

¹ As of 23 November 2018. The new chairman of the Science Committee, Prof. W. J. Cynarski (9 dan), only in November received a calling to this function. Earlier this committee was not active.

² We did not manage to obtain data from PZJJ on the number of clubs registered with the Association in the consecutive years.

due to the lack of specialists in the original *jujutsu*, departures from the genuine Japanese tradition can be observed in PZJJ. The evolving sport rules presumably contribute to this.

PZJJ uses experience and adopts certain institutional models, particularly from *judo* and from the more experienced PZJudo. Marian Jasinski and Wieslaw Blach are generally involved in *judo*, yet they also work for PZJJ, making specific recommendations. While *judo* emerged from the classic Japanese *jujutsu*, the sport discipline of ju-jitsu was basically developed by judoka from Germany and France. Institutions of sport *judo* are applied and adequately modified for the needs of the “younger brother”. Obviously, however, those involved in the non-Olympic sport have far fewer opportunities [Cynarski 2012].

On the other hand a comparison to martial arts organisations – 30 years of YMAA (*Shaolin kung-fu*) or *aikibudo* & *kobudo* in Poland, might produce more interesting evidence. These and similar organisations, however, teach martial arts in traditional ways and most frequently reject or only tolerate sport competition [Skowron-Markowska 2017; Cynarski 2018; Pawelec 2018], while Polish sports associations take an opposite approach. PZJudo or PZJJ at some point only tolerated the fact that traditional forms existed. Subsequently, pursuing sport accomplishments they renounced this culture-related ornamentation.

It can, however, be argued that for years PZJJ has suffered a lack of a generally approved leader. The only one to keep the position of the president for many years, S. A. Badenski today is one of the most highly recognised experts, owner of 9 dan rank (awarded by the Dan Council of the Association). Yet, the policy of awarding high grades to individuals with poor knowledge of *jujutsu* (both traditional and sport form) leads to devaluation of the ranks. Compared to martial arts, there is no Grandmaster recognised as an external authority. Everything is regulated by internal rules. There is no immortal authority, like that of Jigoro Kano in *judo* community.

Sport ju-jitsu is following the path paved by *judo* [Sato 2013; Diya 2015], and is seeking to be recognised as an Olympic discipline. Still, according to a large part of the *jujutsu* community, this approach is wrong – the dispute has continued since the time of rivalry between *judo Kodokan* and other *jujutsu* schools in Japan in the 1800s [Shortt, Hashimoto 1979]. Furthermore, even if sport rivalry is accepted, disputes related to sport regulations continue. It is hard to say whether the changes follow the right path. Safety of contestants definitely is the most important thing [Cynarski 1997]. This is however a fact that in the 1990s the discipline was completely different than today.

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Szkic o historii Polskiego Związku Ju-Jitsu (1993-2018)

Słowa kluczowe: sporty walki, ju-jitsu, sport w Polsce, organizacja, stowarzyszenie

Abstrakt

Perspektywa. Ju-jitsu sportowe jest względnie nowym sportem walki, który ubiega się o dołączenie do grona dyscyplin olimpijskich. W roku 1993 powołano Polski Związek Ju-Jitsu.

Problem i cel. Jak kształtował się rozwój instytucjonalny Polskiego Związku Ju-Jitsu w ciągu minionych 25 lat? Ma to być swego rodzaju studium przypadku ćwierćwiecza funkcjonowania tego związku sportowego.

Metoda. Zastosowano komplementarnie następujące metody badań jakościowych: długoletnia obserwacja uczestnicząca, analizę treści dokumentów i literatury przedmiotu, oraz wywiad z długoletnim prezesem. Uwzględniono łącznie szeroki dyskurs tematycznych źródeł i opracowań.

Wyniki. Entuzjazm działaczy umożliwił zaistnienie PZJJ i przetrwanie pionierskiego okresu. Udało się osiągnąć pewną dojrzałość instytucjonalną, a dobra organizacja i praca trenerska doprowadziły do znakomych wyników sportowych. Wnioski. Wyniki sportowe świadczą na korzyść PZJJ. Przyjmowane są formy instytucjonalne z *judo*. Zaniedbano natomiast Komisję Nauki. Ponadto, z braku specjalistów od oryginalnego *jujutsu*, następuje tu odchodzenie od japońskiego pierwowzoru.