

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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Facial hair and hairstyles in selected warrior cultures and in today’s mass culture¹

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Abstract

Background. Warriors from the earliest times have tried to distinguish themselves – with their outfits or also with stubble and hairdo – from foreign tribes and groups, as well as within their own group according to the adopted hierarchy. And still today, representatives of some martial arts varieties are distinguished by their specific hair grooming or facial hair.

Problem. What is the source of or reason for selecting a particular hairstyle, shaving the face, or maintaining facial hair among male martial artists today?

Method. The author’s long-term (over 40 years) observation is the basic method here. In addition, the author adopted the method of analysing the literature on the subject and a wide discourse on the issue (including mass culture, for example, filmography, and Japanese *anime*).

Results. Referring to historical canons, three main reasons for choosing a hairstyle and shaving or facial hair were established. These are: national traditions, mass culture patterns, and practical considerations.

Conclusions. The presence or absence of hair on the head, and facial hair, but also the hairdo, are part of the identification of many people. They used to be associated with national identity or social status, but today now often linked to fashion or some conscious choice. For newcomers, they are sometimes a way of group identification. Practical considerations mean that no facial hair and short hair are preferred.

Introduction

Martial arts draw from the wealth of military and martial cultures, fighting cultures, and ancient warriors. It is described from the perspective of cultural anthropology, martial arts anthropology, and the sociology of fighting arts [Jones 2002; Cynarski 2012, 2023a]. The appearance of a warrior has a historical significance. But how important is it today for people practicing martial

arts? How important are hairstyle patterns in particular today in the environment of currently practiced martial arts? We can consider changes in cultural patterns based on Margaret S. Archer’s theory of morphogenesis. She has developed a social theory as a humanist sociology and critical realism. This concept of morphogenesis is clearly present in the global scientific circulation of social sciences now. The British sociologist takes into account both human corporeality (primary to the self) and spirit-

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uality. And humanity itself is also subject to the process of morphogenesis. The transcendence dimension of Archer's theory corresponds well with the definition of martial arts in GTFA (General Theory of Fighting Arts) in its humanistic approach. GTFA takes into account the dimensions of transgression and transcendence, and the spiritual factor is constitutive in it to speak of martial art at all. Of course, the tools of combat are the body and weapons, i.e. the physical and technical aspects.

The morphogenetic sequence in the sphere of culture includes the following three phases: 1) cultural conditioning, 2) socio-cultural interaction, 3) cultural elaboration. We can define indicators for achieving each of these stages. At the conditioning stage, relations of contradictions between ideas that generate problem situations may occur. Complementarity relations, on the other hand, favour reproduction, i.e. consolidation of the state of affairs. The interaction phase is decisive; it depends on her whether there will be a social change. At the stage of cultural elaboration, it is decided whether reproduction or morphogenesis will occur, i.e. the transformation of the system [Cynarski 2023a: 18]. This is illustrated in Fig. 1.

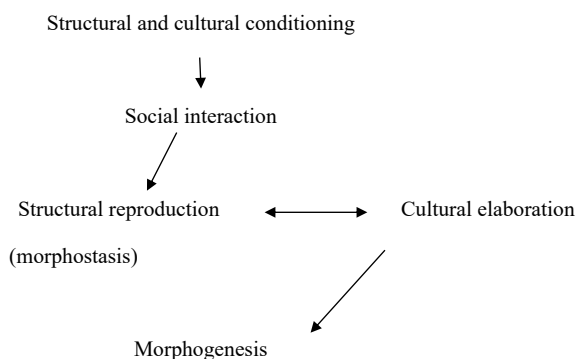


Fig. 1. Basic morphogenetic sequence
[own elaboration, according to Archer 2013a: LVII]

Most often, morphostasis goes into morphogenesis [Archer 2019: 416]. Archer herself identifies morphogenesis with the transformation process [cf. Murayama 1960; Archer 2013b]. The phase of cultural elaboration does not always lead to morphogenesis. In the analysis of the 'elaboration' phase itself, the author of this concept proposes in relation to the socio-cultural level: the possibilities of unification or division, reproduction (duplication) or fragmentation (division) [Archer 2019: 480].

There are so-called 'cultural contradictions' [Archer 2019: 237], because culture is not always and not everywhere integrated. The 'cultural dynamics' results from the presence of contradictory and non-integrated elements. As Archer [2019: 246, 419] wrote: "The elaboration of the cultural system occurs as a result of interactions at the socio-cultural level that lead to the modification of current logical relationships and the emergence of new

ones". To elaborate a cultural system they lead to "rivalry contradictions, material differences, logical inconsistency, fundamental incompatibility" [Archer 2019: 421].

The morphogenesis of various cultural systems is subject to a continuation or process of change, which change is often caused by social change on a larger scale [cf. Porpora 2013; Wight 2013]. In both cases, the state of the institution is consolidated in the institutionalisation process. According to Archer, "Institutionalisation is primarily associated with two things – social recognition and routinisation of practice" [Archer 2019: 468]. Institutionalisation is neutral in the context of morphostasis or morphogenesis. "However, it strengthens morphogenetic changes in a field that is still developing, providing its personnel, material base, and funds" [Archer 2019: 469]. Archer believes in the importance of the practical order, thanks to which self-awareness emerges, followed by personal and social identity. In addition to language, non-language practices are an important channel of communication [Archer 2013a: 154-190]. For example, these could be physical forms and internal experiences specific to martial arts. Archer [2019: 269-279] draws attention to the "need for a good, accurate translation", which may include, for example, a translation from Chinese into English. The specific cultural context should be taken into account, i.e. these "other ideas" in a logical relation [Archer 2019: 289-290]. Therefore, research on foreign culture products requires special care.

In the processes of democratization and dissemination of teaching, adaptation and modernisation of Asian martial arts in the Western world, "armies using martial arts to teach self-actualisation, movie stars advertised as the world's deadliest fighting men, and churches using martial arts to teach children not to fight. Such contradictions are the nature of martial arts in the modern world" [Green 2003: xi; cf. Tokarski 1989]. Examples of competition between supporters of the old (traditional) and new order are conflicts: between reformers and traditionalists; between new and old; also new fashion (external appearance – clothes, hairstyle) versus old fashion.

The following definition used here is (according to the GTFA): "Martial arts are a historic category of flawless methods of unarmed combat fighting and the use of weapons, combined with spiritual elements (both personal development and in the transcendental sphere)" [Cynarski, Skowron 2014]. In the humanist-oriented sociology of physical culture by Zbigniew Krawczyk [2005] and in the theory of cultural dialogue by M. Eliade and S. Tokarski [Tokarski 1976], the mutual influences of ideas of different cultural origins, such as European sport and East Asian martial arts, are emphasized. Tokarski [2005] also emphasizes the cultural context of the perception of corporeality. With a holistic view of man, the problems of his spirituality and corporeality become more easily explained [cf. Cynarski, Obodynski 2011].

The concepts of 'institution' and 'institutionalisa-

tion' were also explained differently. Cynarski [2006] uses this sociological concept in a broader sense as a process of establishing social institutions also broadly understood than by Archer. If given actions to solve a given problem are adopted, applied, and repeated, we can call it internalizing a specific cultural pattern or establishing an institution. Leaders take names of new styles and schools similar to those previously known to them, the rules of promotion for degrees and licenses are introduced similarly, etc. [Cynarski, Sieber, Litwiniuk 2005].

Martial arts co-create today's culture, especially in the area of mass culture and security culture [Cynarski, Slopecki 2016; Cynarski, Piwowarski 2016], but also – more generally – in psycho-physical culture [cf. Cynarski et al. 2015]. For example, Japanese budō (a team of local martial arts and combat sports) grows out of Japanese culture but has already entered the global culture [Nakiri 2015; Inoue 2018]. They are also manifestations of the processes of cultural glocalisation and globalization. The scientific perspective for the reflection undertaken here is created by the General Theory of Fighting Arts, GTFA [Cynarski 2019] and cultural anthropology (including the anthropology of martial arts [Jones 2002; Cynarski 2012; Zeng, Cynarski, Xie 2013]) and sociology of culture [Golka 2008; Jennings, Cynarski 2019]. We are definitely more interested in the man himself than in the martial arts he/she is practising. These martial arts, also known as traditional sports [Blanchard 1995], have their own ontology – it consists of a place, clothes, equipment, but most of all a man as a subject. We define the concepts of martial arts here according to GTFA. In turn, we adopt general-cultural concepts in a sociological or anthropological-cultural sense.

Martial arts, as parts of cultural heritage, must be interpreted in an appropriate cultural context. Due to their specificity, we are talking about separate cultural systems for individual varieties or groups of styles and schools [Zhouxiang 2017; Guo 2019]. Their specificity influences the functioning of these martial arts also outside their countries of origin. One of the concepts that will help to describe the undertaken problem are today's new tribes. Well, in the area of fighting arts, also martial arts and combat sports and self-defence systems [Cynarski 2017], people practise in small groups and attend many training seminars. These seminars are meetings of enthusiasts, sometimes international. For the people, the most important aim of participation is the practical study of a fighting art. We can here use the term – “neotribes” [Maffesoli 1996; cf. Golka 2008]. For people studying the arts, this is the centre of their universe and the reason for the meeting. Members of the neotribes are sometimes dressed or styled in specific ways.

While once hairstyle, beard, or mustache shape resulted from the prevailing fashion or – like clothes – were part of national identification, these historical forms can be analyzed in terms of social facts. In turn, their

changes, transformation or morphogenesis may result from structural changes in the cultural system (conditioning) and the socio-cultural response [cf. Archer 2019: 480]. Changes in political, structural, and cultural conditions create a contradiction in the sphere of values and goals in relation to these and other forms of physical culture, leading to morphogenesis [cf. Archer 2019: 311].

Let us try to indicate the sources of these cultural patterns that are accepted or rejected in various communities. The basic qualitative method used for the purposes of this study is the author's long-term (over 40-year) participant observation, or active observation, sometimes passive or accompanying, overt [Green et al. 2019]. In addition, of course, the method of analyzing the literature on the subject and a broad discourse on the issue under consideration (including additional reference to the area of mass culture – filmography and Japanese anime) is used.

1. National traditions

The pre-Slavic “*golva*” (shaving) is a word for the ancient custom of “shaving heads while leaving only the tip of the hair on the crown” [Moszynski 1957: 251], which concerned perhaps already Scythian warriors. This haircut has survived in the Cossack tradition as the so-called Cossack *Czub* [“With Fire and Sword”]. The “combat *hopak*” cultivated today in Ukraine is, since 1985, an attempt at a fairly successful renaissance of this ancient tradition [Pylat 2010, 2018; Fig. 2; Photo 1]. It is a martial art related to the national identification and reference to the heroic history of Ukraine [cf. Bureychak 2012; Pylat 2018; Cynarski 2023b].

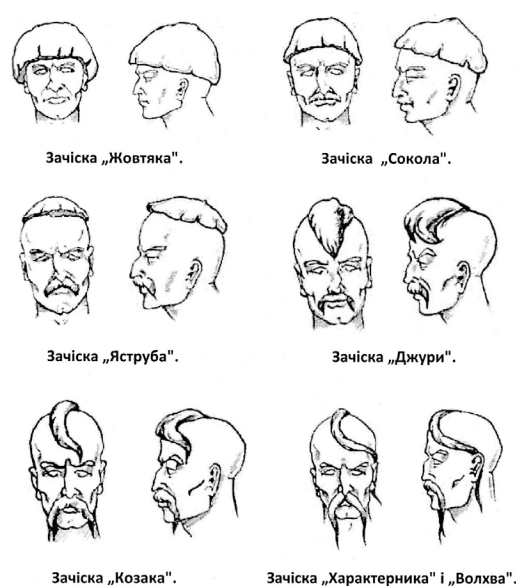


Fig. 2. Various types of Cossack hairstyle. Scan from a book by V. Pylat [2018: 69].

In turn, a Polish nobleman of the Sarmatian era wore a mustache and usually short hair on his head. So similar to the hairstyle of the “Falcon” (Сокола) from Fig. 2 [Pylat 2018: 68-69]. The descendants of the Polish nobility very often wear a mustache today, like Zbigniew Sawicki, the main master of the *Signum Polonicum* school of fencing in Poland [Photo 1]. Among today’s enthusiasts of old Polish fencing, there is an overrepresentation of the descendants of the Polish nobility. These, in turn, usually draw on old Polish patterns.



Photo 1. Masters conducting martial arts workshops during the IMACSSS Congress in Rzeszow, Oct. 2018. From the left: Mohamed M.N. Shapie (*Silat*, Malaysia), Zbigniew Sawicki (Polish sabre, Poland), Roland J. Maroteaux (*Aiki-jūjutsu*, France), Volodymyr Pylat (*Hopak*, Ukraine), Matteo Giacometti (*Muay Thai*, Italy) [from the author’s collection; courtesy of IMACSSS & IPA].

In distant times, between 3000 and 2000 BC, warriors with the genetic haplogroup R1a1 Y-DNA inhabited the Elbe and the Volga. Then some of them, called Aryans, went south and southeast, occupying Iran, Afghanistan, and northern India [Cynarski 2018]. Ayyar is an equestrian warrior who probably in his original form was the Aryan warrior. It is very possible that his head was originally decorated with that Scythian-Slavic crest. Between 2000 BC and 650 AD he fought repeatedly against Persian, Macedonian, Mongolian, and Arab invaders [Sidky 2002]. Afghanistan was later Islamized. The Persian word Ayyar is used to describe the warriors from Iraq and Iran from 9-12 BC. Perhaps they were descendants or followers of earlier Aryan warriors. Since then, the attributes of the Afghan warrior man have been a beard and a sword for centuries. The beard has remained to this day, only the rifle (most often the *Kalashnikov*) replaced the sword. On the other hand, a beard may indicate a Muslim denomination as in some varieties of Islam.

The ethos of ancient warriors has been preserved in the tradition of the Afghan Pashtuns and their ethical canon – in the code of local warriors [Sierakowska-Dyndo 2007]. There is a neighborhood of biological (genetic) kinship and cultural heritage here. In turn, among the Hindu Brahmins, we can add to this the hypothesis that the hairstyle is related to what concerns the ancient Slavs

and Cossacks (*golva*) [Vide: Fig. 3]. Could the Cossack chub, an attribute of an Ario-Slavic warrior, have been preserved both in Ukraine and in the culture of the highest caste in India?



Fig. 3. Brahmin wedding ceremony, early 20th century illustration [Photo. Culture Club / Getty Images].

In turn, in numerous tribes of North American Indians, the heads were decorated with plumes, and the Iroquois became famous for their special hair top. Even today, a rebellious youth or a girl wears a “Mohawk”. Such a hairstyle was popularized by films such as “The Last of the Mohicans”, and the punks subculture tried to distinguish it from the environment.

Along with black slaves, the culture of African warriors came to Brazil. They created a special fight-dance called capoeira. Since the dark-skinned *capoeira* teachers naturally had afro haircuts (tuft stubble), their American and European students sometimes imitated them. This is due to the fashion for capoeira, *reggae*, etc. “atmosphere”, although *reggae* music is a completely different story. In popular culture, in American martial arts movies, however, it can be mixed.

The bald head of Shaolin Buddhist monks and other famous monasteries are examples of shaving off any stubble on the head or of having the distinctive “zero” hairstyle. Shaolin is the birthplace of martial arts and their legends at the same time [Shahar 2008; Chen 2016]. Thus, the image of a Buddhist monk became popular in mass culture [Cynarski, Slopecki 2016]. Just like the image of a samurai. On the other hand, the braids of the ancient Celts and Vikings did not survive in the environment of martial arts adepts, because their military traditions in the form of the described educational systems of martial arts have not been preserved.

National or sentimental reasons lead to a preference for specific hairstyles and general care for appearance, which applies to various traditions of East and Southeast Asia, such as *kung-fu*, Thai boxing or Vietnamese martial arts, also among emigrants from those countries [cf. Carruthers 1998; Brook 2014]. In gangster movies, we often see representatives of Chinese triads with long hair. In turn, the global popularity of *Muay Thai* means that, for example, some young Poles are trying to become like Thai warriors.

2. Patterns from mass culture

Samurai and *kung-fu* movies popularized samurai and Manchurian braids in mass culture. The Manchurian braid was a symbol of the Manchurian dynasty and an attribute of the occupant of the Middle Kingdom. Therefore, in the *wushu kung-fu* tradition and wuxia legends [Chen 2016], such an image is not promoted. The opposite is true in the case of the samurai tradition, promoted not only by Japanese cinema [cf. “The Last Samurai”; Inoue 2018]. The samurai bun is also present today among adepts of Japanese martial arts.

The martial arts tradition in Japan (*bujutsu* & *budō*) recommended that warriors wear their hair in a bun and the facial hair should be thoroughly shaved. Practical considerations were probably decisive not to give the opponent a chance to use a chin grip. Masters of higher rank were entitled to a beard. Thus, for example, the French *hanshi* R. Maroteaux (school *Takeda-ryū Maroto-ha* [Maroteaux 1993]), representing this tradition, now wears a beard and long hair [Photo 1].

Sometimes martial arts fighters, like the fashionable MMA today, imitate fictional characters from the area of mass culture. An example is the hairstyle of the warrior Songo (or Goku) from the popular cartoon and anime “Dragon Ball”. This alien with the features of the legendary king of monkeys had a fancy hairstyle in deep disorder [Photo 2].



Photo 2. Character of Songo / Goku by Akira Toriyama [YouTube 2017].

In turn, the film hero Nico, played by S. Seagal (“Nico. Above the Law”), inspired the generation of karate people to wear long hair tied up in a ponytail. Some time ago, a few well-groomed martial arts adepts came to sensei Cynarski, who was teaching *aikibudō* / *aiki-jūjutsu*

[Swider 2018]. They wanted, like their idol (American actor Steven Seagal was really aikidō master, 7 dan), to master the techniques of the original, “combat” *aikidō*.

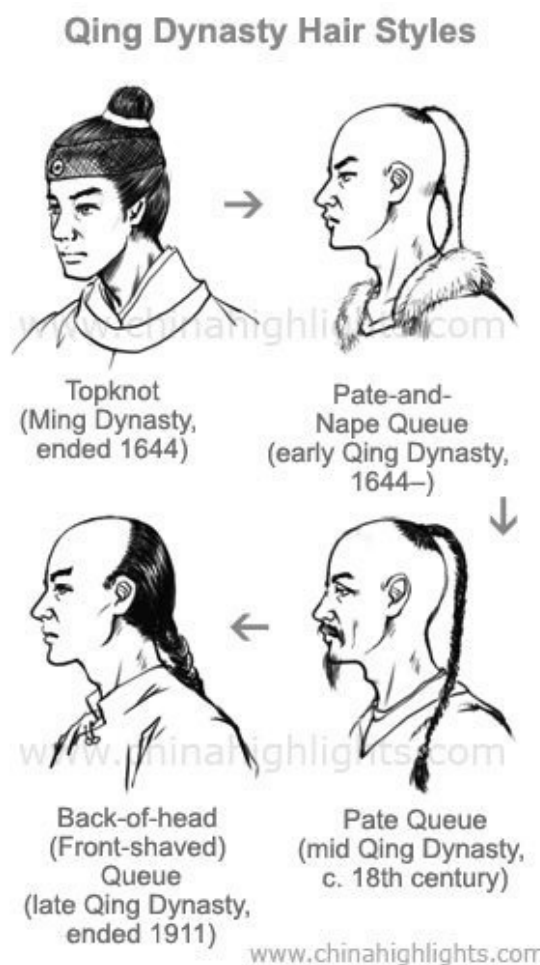


Fig. 4. Politics of men's hair in Chinese history [after www.chinahighlights.com].

Manchurian braids [Hiltebeitel 1998: 128; Fig. 4] we only watch in *kung-fu* films, in which usually Chinese patriots can beat up Manchu officials and soldiers. Today's adepts of Chinese martial arts usually wear short hair.

3. Practical considerations

For practical reasons, rather short hair is preferable among today's warriors. In *jūjutsu* and in various forms of self-defence, a hair grip is used (Jap. *kaminoke-mochi*). In the photo [Photo 3] we can see the way of using the hair grip in a fight. Having long hair or a beard by a warrior gives his opponent an advantage. It is especially about real situations of assault and self-defense, especially hand-to-hand combat. In the case of fencing (greater distance in combat), the length of the hair does not matter that much.

It is similarly impractical to have longer hair because it is more difficult to care for when daily training requires

frequent bathing. Obviously, washing and drying shorter hair is, above all, much shorter (time-saving).



Photo 3. Shihan Lothar Sieber demonstrates one of the techniques of self-defence according to the modernized *Yōshin-ryū jūjutsu* school. L. Sieber's School in Munich, Germany [author's own collection, courtesy of GM L. Sieber].

In turn, a beard or a mustache are already a matter of individual choice of a martial arts or combat sports adept. Only long beards and mustaches are very rare here, as they are obviously impractical. The exception is the Ukrainian combat *Boiovyi hopak* (combat *hopak*), where the hairstyle [Fig. 2] indicates advancement and identifies the warrior more than the clothes he wears.

Summary

The presence or absence of hair on the head and facial hair, or combing them, is a component of the identification of many people. They used to be associated with national identity or social status, today – often with fashion or some conscious choice. They are sometimes a means of group identification for the neoplasia (like the Mohawk among Punk musicians).

The reference to the hairstyle tradition is much stronger in the Ukrainian combat *hopak* than in the samurai or Chinese traditions practiced today. The beard of Muslim warriors, in turn, is the result of their strong religious identification. It may be argued that the symbolic meaning of a hairstyle or facial hair is of minor importance today. On the other hand, for practical reasons, no facial hair and short hair is preferred.

Filmography (as a source)

1. "Dragon Ball", Japan, by Akira Toriyama (manga and anime).
2. "Nico. Above the Law", USA, action film, dir. Andrew Davis, scenario Ronald Shusett, Andrew Davis, 1988.
3. "The Last of the Mohicans", USA, period action drama film, dir. M. Mann, scenario Ph. Dunne, M. Mann, 1992.
4. "The Last Samurai", USA, period action drama film, dir. E. Zwick, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2003.
5. "With Fire and Sword" (Pol. *Ogniem i mieczem*), Polish historical film, dir. J. Hoffman, 1999, according to the "Trilogy" by Henryk Sienkiewicz.

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Zarost i fryzura w wybranych kulturach wojowników i współczesnej kulturze masowej

Słowa kluczowe: sztuki walki, kultura wojowników, fryzura, wzory, dzisiejszy wojownik

Abstrakt

Tło. Wojownicy od najdawniejszych czasów starali się wyróżnić swoim strojem, ale także zarostem i fryzurą – zarówno od obcych plemion i grup, jak i w obrębie własnej grupy, zgodnie z przyjętą hierarchią. Również dzisiaj przedstawiciele niektórych

odmian sztuk walki wyróżniają się odpowiednim ułożeniem włosów lub zarostem.

Problem. Jakie jest źródło lub powód otrzymywania wybranej fryzury, golenia twarzy lub utrzymywania zarostu wśród współczesnych mężczyzn-artystów sztuk walki?

Metoda. Podstawową metodą jest tu wieloletnia (ponad 40-letnia) obserwacja autora. Ponadto autor przyjął metodę analizy literatury przedmiotu i szerokiego dyskursu na ten temat (m.in. kultura masowa – filmografia, japońskie *anime*).

Wyniki. Nawiązując do kanonów historycznych, ustalono trzy główne powody wyboru fryzury i golenia czy zarostu. Są to: tradycje narodowe, wzorce kultury masowej oraz względy praktyczne.

Wnioski. Obecność lub brak włosów na głowie i twarzy, a także fryzury, są częścią identyfikacji wielu osób. Kiedyś kojarzono je z tożsamością narodową czy statusem społecznym, dziś – często z modą lub jakimś świadomym wyborem. Dla nowoprybyłych są czasami sposobem identyfikacji grupowej. Względy praktyczne oznaczają, że preferowany jest brak zarostu i krótkie włosy.