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## **KEY WORDS**

Martial Arts, Judo, Aikido, Jujutsu, Taijitsu, Japan, Buddhism, Dao, Religion, Mystique, Myth, Buddha, Taiqiquan, Baqua, Symbols, Number, Wheel, Circle, Divinity, Prayer, Ninja, Ninjutsu, Dr. Hatsumi, Kujikiri, Ocultism, Jigoro Kano, Birth, Death, Rebirth, Karma, Ages, China, Korea, Kamakura, Eschatology, Life Cycles, Theogony, Pantheon, Creation, World Egg, Yin, Yang, Bad, Good, Sword, Katana, Weapons, Tanto, Hakama, Kimono, Tibet, India, Yamagushi, Musashi, Kendo, Samurai, Ninja Women, Dynasties, Periods, Ancient, Kami, Shinto, Nobunaga, Meditation, Demon, Emperor, Amaterasu.

## **SUMMARY**

The World's History has evolved on multiple plans, never just one way or by fragments. Religion, politics, culture, war have been inseparable during all the human existence. There is no place in the world with so many ideas, concepts and conflicts as Asia. No matter if we refer to the Far East or the Near East, the greatness of events surpasses all expectations. Asia represents the provenance place of agriculture (Mesopotamia), of writing (Sumer), of the great religious figures: Jesus of Nazareth, Mohamed, Buddha, Lao Zi, Confucius, and so many others.<sup>1</sup> Asia is the place of the great armed battles, the place where the widest and the most powerful territories (the Kingdom of Qin) have been established, but also the place from where the migratory people led by Attila left towards Europe.

After thousands of years of history, Asia or the East is the place towards which we turn our look or our thoughts every time we read the sacred writings (Torah, the New Testament, Upanishads, War Art etc.) or find the news about another conflict that menaces the peace or even the human existence.

All this history cannot exist without the three essential elements: religion, politics and war. The study "Martial Arts and Asian Societies" tries to demonstrate the connection between the wars' art, religion and politics. The actual materials talk separately and almost nothing about the connection between the three elements. Whoever wants to find out some details about the evolution and development of a martial art, of some Asian country policy or of its religion, can find this information in the world's libraries and museums but it shall be fragmented.

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<sup>1</sup> Moses, the great religious figure of the Hebrew people was born in Egypt, a territory belonging to the African continent.

Throughout history, authors who have written about the political or religious events, referred only to a certain aspect, totally ignoring or omitting the others.

This study represents the research for more than 13 years of numerous specialized writings concerning martial arts and also in the field of Buddhist, Dao, Shinto, Christian and Judaist Religion. We have researched many political and geopolitical writings in Asia but also in Europe and America, writings that have influenced in a certain manner the historical events in China and Japan. Sociological and anthropological writings had an important role in elucidating some questions concerning the origin of some peoples such as Japan and its connection with the Ainu population.

There are few styles of martial arts that actually respect the title of Martial Art. Unfortunately, they are just some kitsch that mislead and may even change the perception about the history of the arts of war and the next generations will not know what an art of war does really represent.

Being a martial arts practitioner for more than 3 decades, I have considered important the existence of a very detailed study of the historical evolution of the martial arts for those who are interested in the evolution of some religious or political conflicts (sociologists, historians, anthropologists, political analysts etc.) and for those interested in the signification of certain religious and martial arts' symbols to find them all together.

One of the most difficult problems raised by this work during the 13 years of research was the problem concerning the origin of martial arts. In order to find out some historical data on an event one may resort to the documents written and kept in the archives or conserved in museums but concerning the war arts, things become very complicated. There are very few historical data in the world referring to the origins of martial arts. Historical data really speaking about the real origins of a style are in possession of the families that transfer the art and not many of them make it public, considering it a private matter. This is because the style practised is part of the family patrimony and cannot be estranged.

Another problem raised from the beginning of the research refers to the documents speaking about one style or another in symbolic terms. For instance, the study of the well known samurai Miamoto Musashi ("The Book of the Five Circles" - "Go Ri no Jo"), who approaches fighting methods and strategies with two swords. The message transmitted by the author is not accessible for the Orientals because this study exposes the execution of techniques and the application way, using the Dao symbols. For this, it is necessary to understand the evolution of the Dao doctrine in Japan (till the date of the study writing, the XVII<sup>th</sup> century) and then to physically practise the presented techniques and not least to know the biography of the author, Musashi.

The whole Asian literature referring to fighting strategies, techniques but also to the evolution of a martial art is presented by the authors under a symbolic form, with many present gods

(yamagushi) and fantastic phenomena. In order to understand these aspects I resorted to the hermeneutic method that I have combined with observation methods.

The materials used to write this research were especially bibliographic, then the dialogs with several masters in martial arts who have practised beside famous names of the war arts. Besides all this, I had my own personal practice of many arts such as judo, aikido, taijutsu, taekwondo, taiqiquan etc.

The study is divided into four great chapters:

**Chapter 1.** “*Mystique*”. It defines the term “myth” given by various authors and classifies myths. Then it presents a mythology of the origins of the actual war arts of Eastern people considering that the gods were those who initiated people in secrets of weapons handling. Here are presented the bibliographical data from Japan, China and also Europe (Ancient Greek, Rome), Near East (Israel).

Japan and China myths are presented in order to understand the importance of certain acts, events and political concepts that stood as a base for some states or political and military ideas etc. The goddess Amaterasu and the emperor are two symbols without which Japan could not exist. The evolution of these concepts in the history of Japan is widely presented in this chapter.

The classification and role of gods (kami) in the Nippon family, their role in the evolution of war arts of the samurai and ninja fighters are also approached.

This chapter also presents the Dao doctrine and the primary role of the emperor Qin (China) in the social evolution of a little area that has become one of the greatest powers of the world. Yin-yang, two concepts present in nowadays usual language, influenced politics and also the war arts. The two elements are the base for many of the martial arts such as taiqiquan, baquaquan, ninjutsu, etc.

An important subject refers to the death worship. Respect for the deceased, the way death is perceived and awaited makes us understand the reason why in China and Japan family is worshipped, and how important is the master’s role (sifu - in Chinese, sensei - in Japanese) for an individual’s life.

**Chapter 2.** “*Asia’s Religions and their impact upon the society*” presents a review of the history of Buddhism, Dao and religious leaders, Buddha and Lao Zi. Also the religious concepts and doctrines such as Karma, soul transmigration, Wheel of Life, Suffering Causes, the Four Noble Truths stand as a base for martial arts philosophy (style of the five animals, Shaolin styles etc.).

Diffusion of Buddhism and life and death conceptions changed radically the Asian society thinking.

Many martial arts developed in the monasteries of China and in the mountains of Japan and this is why a presentation of the religious life is indispensable. Famous politicians and warriors stayed at monasteries such as those from Wudang, Shaolin, etc. These monasteries influenced the Asian medieval politics. Many of the emperors, daimyo and shoguns realised that the monastery is the place where they take political decisions or form warriors and can take refuge. This is why some of them decided to destroy them and others rehabilitated or kept them. One of the examples is the Shaolin monastery from China, which was burned down many times by the emperors of China in order to eliminate the famous fighters sheltered there.

Another form of Buddhism is Zen, which reached Japan through the Chinese Buddhism Chen. This religious current radically influenced the conception of sword and hand to hand combat. By applying the Buddhist doctrine Zen, the samurai was becoming more responsible for his fellow's life and the arrogance (given by the social status) becomes servitude towards daimyo.

The Buddhist gods, loans of the local deities or Hindus, changed the conception about life and death, so the samurai pays more attention to the reason for which he takes out the sword. The religious doctrine, but also the presence of numerous gods, is the only thing that induces fear to the samurai. Even if, publicly he declares himself atheist, from a generation to another he may be found in temples, bringing oblations to the gods in order to be protected against the hell's tortures.

The role of Tibetan Buddhism is essential to understand the evolution of meditations in Martial Arts. Numerous forms of meditations and of Tibetan medicine spread out in Asia, reaching Korea and Japan, where there shall appear fighting systems such as koppo jutsu (school belonging to ninjutsu) and also some forms of medical healing practised till nowadays.

**Chapter 3. "Symbols".** This chapter deals with the evolution and implication that many concepts have in sacred Buddhist, Shinto, Dao writings and their transfer in martial arts. After the definition and classification of symbols, the chapter goes on with the presentation of the five elements of life (water, air, wood, fire, earth) and their importance in taking the political decisions but also in social life (rituals) but especially in martial arts, through actual gestures.

*Numerology* in martial arts has an important role. The number of repetitions of breaths, the number of techniques in an exercise like Kata (model) represents indispensable elements for martial arts. In China, politics was made under the influence of numbers. Chinese emperors took symbolic grades and numbers to protect them in mundane life and in their life in heavens.

*Gestures* are symbols present in all world's religions, mostly in Shinto and Buddhist religions. They were taken over by the practitioners of martial arts and adapted to the secular needs. Thus, we find the Mundra gestures in the prayers of ninja fighters (called kujikiri), by which the fighter has a relation with the five elements of life, with the gods (kami) in order to become even.

*Weapons* are symbols of gods, becoming an embodiment when they get into people's hands. This chapter also presents the symbolism and importance of weapons for the practitioner of martial arts: katana (samurai sword), armour, mirror, comb, the feared weapons of ninja fighters etc.

*Clothing* symbolises the social category. We present here the types of kimonos and their symbols for the Nippon society, the symbols of coloured belts (obi) and their signification for the practitioner.

In the symbols category the rituals of martial arts are also mentioned. There are presented the martial arts with the most religious symbols (sumo, aikido, ninjitsu).

Samurai's history, evolution, education and role in the Japanese society are other major topics, widely debated in this chapter.

The dragon, one of the most important symbols of the Asian society, closes the symbol part.

**Chapter 4.** "*History, Politics and Asian Society*". The last part of the study contains the political evolution of Japan and China, starting from the first history periods of these two countries.

Political decisions were made along the history paying respect to the religious, financial and social interests of the state's or communities leaders. The consequences of these decisions changed the history forever or for a long time. In this respect we mention the instauration of Tokugawa shogun's administration (1603-1868), isolating Japan from the rest of the world for more than 200 years.

The importance of warrior classes (samurai) is overwhelming to our days. If the samurai served his master till his death, nowadays the Nippon employee follows the same way no matter where he works.

The importance of politics is essential in martial arts. Politics without the army is a utopia. The present-day China and Japan are the result of the great decisions made firstly among the families, then among the clans and then among the great powers leading the world. Japan would have remained isolated if the commercial roads of the great powers in XIX<sup>th</sup> Century had not passed by that area. Hong Kong would have remained an area belonging to Great Britain if the Chinese communists infiltrated in the financial giant clans had not ganged together and

blackmailed the English people and the Chinese businessmen involved in the development of this area.

Japan and China, nowadays two great superpowers, are in the same conflict as 300-400 years ago. This study analyses the political and military implications on their territory.

This work needed a detailed study of political history, especially in order to answer questions such as: why did warrior classes appear in Japan and what was the base of its long life, when Europe and Latin America did not have a warrior class to live so long. Why Japan is not open for the traditional martial arts if they are a national patrimony? Could someone reach the present economic success of Japan if it was used as a strategy the samurai class system?

The end of this work brings us the joy of martial arts history seen from a social, political and religious point of view. It is the only national work of this kind, bringing together key elements of a society (religion-politics-social life).

In the end, we have to mention that the approached analysis type in this work leads to the conservation and transmission of a cultural inheritance, meaning the martial arts which nowadays have crossed the Asian frontiers and risk to lose their true message because of ignorance, lack of information, misinformation or unverified information. Without this history, we assume the risk to see martial arts and Asian societies as something impermeable and abstruse, and in certain cases to hate them so much that we eliminate them based on the fact that they are pagan and they are not according to our religious concepts.

At the end of this work there is a rich bibliography, in many languages, necessary to all those who are interested in continuing the inexhaustible research on this land.

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