



GAME, DRAMA, RITUAL IN MARTIAL ARTS AND COMBAT SPORTS

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 1ST IMACSSS
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Genoa, Italy
8th - 10th June, 2012

Scientific Editors Sergio Raimondo, Carlos Gutiérrez-García, Mikel Pérez-Gutiérrez



Laboratorio di ricerca sociale
Università di Cassino



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General presentation

The International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society (IMACSSS), the Unione Italiana Sportper tutti Area Discipline Orientali (UISP ADO), and the Laboratorio di Ricerca Sociale - Dipartimento di Scienze Umane, Sociali e della Salute Università di Cassino, Italy, propose the **1st IMACSSS International Scientific Conference** with a focus on *Game, Drama, Ritual in Martial Arts and Combat Sports*. The Conference will take place from 8 - 10 June 2012 in Genova, Italy.

The organizers firmly believe that this initiative will provide a valuable opportunity to promote, enlarge, and strengthen the scientific community developed around the investigation of martial arts and combat sports (MA&CS). The central focus of the Conference will be the scientific interpretation of the fundamental connections among socio-cultural categories of game, drama and ritual in the context of MA&CS. These modes of interaction can be found in all kinds of sports, but, in the specific context of MA&CS, they are even richer in socio-cultural meanings than in the context of other physical activities. In fact, the analysis of these behavioral genres also applies to research in very different fields ranging from religious studies to medicine, from expressive culture to applied studies.

The Conference also will be the inaugural event of an interactive show, to be held in the same venue throughout June 2012. The show will be dedicated to the famous French painter and judoka Yves Klein, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

Topics

- Bio Physical Topic
- Bio Technical and Bio Tactical Topics
- Pedagogical Topic
- Philosophical, Anthropological and Taxonomy Topics
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KEY EVENTS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF ASIAN MARTIAL ARTS SOCIAL IMAGINARY IN THE WEST

Keywords: Images, China, Japan, war, counterculture

Problem identification

Asian martial arts (AMA) are nowadays complex, diverse, popular, and globalized cultural products. Every AMA has unique features depending on various factors such as cultural origin, social uses, historical evolution or intercultural exchange processes (see Green & Svinth, 2010). Nevertheless, while the particularities of each AMA style are usually known to experts and practitioners, popular knowledge about AMA is generally made up of more comprehensive, simple, and superficial images. This contribution aims at analyzing the key historical moments when AMA social imaginary was built in the West.

Methodology

We used Charles Taylor's (2004: 23) broad concept of social imaginary as cognitive schemas shared by ordinary people: "the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations". Historical studies about AMA in the West and broader studies about intercultural relations between East and West were reviewed to locate key moments for the creation and evolution of AMA imaginary. Particularly, attention was paid to socio-political circumstances framing AMA impact in Western societies.

Results and discussion

Two key events were identified. The first one was linked with Japan's rise as an international military power, in the 1890's and 1900's. Japanese MA, especially jujutsu/judo, resumed the images of traditional and modern Japan (samurai and soldier). They were perceived as advanced means for self-defense, physical and moral education, and also as modern sports. Manly attributes such as strength, practical intelligence, discipline, courage, honor or integrity, were enhanced to form the image of the "educated loyal soldier" MA practitioner. Later on, these images permeated and evolved in different degrees and rhythms to most new AMA imported to the West (e.g., Karate, Taekwondo, Muay Thai). AMA ulterior sportification processes, MA films or AMA military training were important factors for the permanence and evolution of this first AMA social imaginary.

The second key event in the construction of AMA social imaginary in the West was linked with the New Age countercultural movement of the second half of the 20th century. New Age movement maintains that "inner spirituality –embedded within the self and the natural order as a whole– serves as the key to moving from all that is wrong with life to all that is right" (Heelas, 1996:16). Although India was an important inspiration in New Age movement they were not its MA but yoga the most prominent Indian physical practice imported in the West. However, Chinese MA such as Tai Chi attracted New Agers and were covered with New Age philosophy. The popularization of Zen philosophy also played an important role in enhancing AMA spirituality. Thus, AMA social imaginary incorporated these New Age images of

relaxation, inner harmony, softness and holistic health and worldview –as the image of an elderly person practicing Tai Chi under a tree shows.

Conclusion

Japanese rise as an international military power and the New Age countercultural movement were identified as the key events in the construction of Asian Martial Arts social imaginary in the West. While “Japanese model” created images of AMA as means for self-defense, physical and moral education, and modern sports practice, “New Age model” created images of AMA as means for achieving holistic health and harmony with the self and with the nature/universe. Both models coexist and influence each other nowadays.

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