RUSSIAN JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT
Volume 17 No. 3 2022

DOI: 10.14526/2070-4798-2022-17-3-107-109

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu: a historiographical fraud

Ronald Condé
Escola Superior de Polícia Civil (ESPC)
Curitiba, Brazil
ORCID: 0000-0001-7517-0141, legacyofhonorhonor@gmail.com

Abstract: For many contemporary practitioners, Jiu Jitsu is not a martial art of Japanese origin, but an Indian one. This occurred because a misinformation was propagated for a long time by the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Confederation (CBJJ) website, on which it was taught that Jiu Jitsu arrived in Japan was due to the expansion of Buddhism across the Asian continent through Indian monks. ***Materials and methods***. The bibliographic survey consists of articles from electronic journals, books and interviews related to the subject under consideration. The method used for this study was the literature review. ***Results.*** Jiu Jitsu was born as a martial art of the warrior aristocracy dedicated to military activity and not to contemplative asceticism [12]. Just like Jiu Jitsu, Shuai Jiao and Ssireum, which may have been probably some of its matrices, were geared towards the warfare [10,11], oriented, consequently, by the tradition of action rather than the tradition of contemplation. Regarding the modern Jiu Jitsu, it has never changed nationality. It has been only singularized in its emphases due to the impacts of the competitive rules adopted in Brazil, mainly due to the absence of external pressures on the State of Brazil, as took place in Japan, in order to ban its practice and force the masters to readapt its principles according to the western paradigms of the New World Order [2]. ***Conclusion***. It can be surely inferred that the BJJ brand and related ones are based on a historiographical fraud that has been doing a disservice to the multiple sectors dedicated to the study and improvement of Jiu Jitsu, by disconnecting it, in an oblique way, from the tradition from which it came and belongs to, so they cannot know the truth about the Martial Art which they practice..
Keywords: history of martial arts, jiu jitsu, hand-to-hand combat, Japanese culture, Mitsuyo Maeda.

For citation: Ronald Condé. Brazilian Jiu Jitsu: a historiographical fraud. Russian Journal of Physical Education and Sport. 2022; 17(3): 91-99. DOI: 10.14526/2070-4798-2022-17-3-107-109.

Introduction

As writing record of history, historiography does not always reflect the truth of historical facts and events, since it can be dictated by the personal interests of those who write it. In this sense, the modern historiography on Jiu Jitsu has been following - distorted by absurd narratives. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the inconsistency and falsity of such historiographical version and to give credit back to the civilization that developed this noble art.

Materials and methods

This research is characterized as qualitative. The method used for this study was the literature review. A search was made through the databases of Google, Scielo and Research Gate. The bibliographic survey consists of articles from electronic journals, books and interviews related to the subject under consideration. To carry out this procedure, the following keywords was entered: the modern history of martial arts, jiu jitsu, hand-to-hand combat, Japanese culture, Mitsuyo Maeda. At first, the modern historiography of jiu jitsu was investigated in scientific articles. Then, that was confronted with some historical facts recorded in literature in order to evaluate its coherence and consistence.

Results and discussion

It's a widely understanding accepted by everyone that Jiu Jitsu arrived in Brazil through the Japanese called Mitsuyo Maeda from Hirosaki, known as Conde Koma. Although Maeda was a member of the Kodokan and, therefore, an exponent of Judo, in The Holy Cross Land, the term most used to refer to this martial art was Kano Jiu Jitsu, or generically Jiu Jitsu. It

is semantically equivalent to Kano Ju-jutsu or Ju-Jutsu. This is due to the fact that those two terms were used interchangeably until the end of World War II [1]. But after the occupation of Japan by the Americans troops, martial arts were banned over there and the justification for such prohibition was its supposedly bellicose and martial character. Consequently, the term Judo came to prevail over Kano Jiu-Jitsu and began to be emphasized as a method of physical education and sports practice and not as a martial art, precisely to be legalized [2].

However, for many contemporary practitioners,

Jiu Jitsu is not an art of Japanese origin, but an Indian one. According to the red belt Crézio Chávez [3], "Jiu Jitsu has nothing from Japanese, Jiu Jitsu is Indian". This misunderstanding stems, above all, from the oral transmission of the history of Jiu Jitsu in the academies passed on from masters to disciples. But the effects of this (sub)version have also reached the academic field, as it can be verified in the papers mentioned in the references below. This occurred because this misinformation was propagated for a long time by the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Confederation (CBJJ) website, as it can be duly verified in the bibliographic references of several articles in scientific journals that refer to the CBJJ page on which this story of Jiu Jitsu of Indian origin used to be widespread [4,5]. Even today there are websites that spread this gracie historiographical approach. On Rodrigo Gracie's website, on the page entitled "The birth of Gracie Jiu-Jitsu " you can find practically a copy of the story then broadcast on the CBJJ website, enriched still with didactic illustrations. It's been said that the origin of Jiu Jitsu, which arrived in Brazil through Conde Koma, is Indian and that its arrival in Japan was due to the expansion of Buddhism across the Asian continent [6].

It is estimated that Buddhism was transmitted to China via the silk road between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD [7]. However, even if it's assumed that Jiu Jitsu was propagated through Buddhism, it's verified that long before this influx of religiosity, there had been already historical registers of hand-to-hand combat systems in the territories from which the yayois emigrated [8,9]. The Chinese combat system, known as Shuai Jiao [10], and the Korean one, known as Ssireum [11] date back to the pre-Christian era. Previously, therefore, the spread of Buddhism through Asia. In a scenario that could be raised in order to make this (sub) version less unreasonable, it could be argued that the martial knowledge of Buddhist monks, at most, would have been incorporated into the existing ones, but in no way internalized by lay individuals in the science of hand-to-hand combat as it has been suggested. However, this hypothesis still remains unsustainable, since Jiu Jitsu was born as a martial art of the warrior aristocracy dedicated to military activity and not to contemplative asceticism [12]. Just like Jiu Jitsu, Shuai Jiao and Ssireum, which may have been probably some of its matrices, were geared towards the warfare [10,11], oriented, consequently, by the tradition of action rather than the tradition of contemplation.

As evidenced in some ethnological and genetic studies, the Japanese aristocracy of yamato stems from the assimilation of the Yayoi and Jōmon peoples. The latter had inhabited the lands of Japan thousands of years before the formers immigrated over there, that is, since the prehistoric age [13,14]. It is therefore quite difficult to conjecture, except through a romantic and pacifist abstraction, that the Jōmons did not have their own indigenous hand-to-hand combat system, as, for example, Native Americans have, such their wrestling known as Huka- Huka. The Shakushain's revolt provides evidence in the oposite direction, in the sense that these ethnic components of Archaic Japan were endowed with an extremely intrepid and unsubmissive spirit and, therefore, of outstanding military value [15,16].

In this sense, it cannot be said that the hand-to-hand combat system practiced by the samurai class was introduced by a foreign people through missionary Buddhist monks, disregarding the warlike atmosphere they lived in and the innovative, criative character of the Nipponeses. Furthermore, Buddhism is not a proselytizing religion that leads people to abdicate their positions in favor of something new and a soteriological perspective. It is worth mentioning: Jiu Jitsu did not arrive in Japan to provide lay people with knowledge of hand-to-hand combat through religious apostles and with that it obtained a position of primacy over what was practiced there, as suggested by Brazilian historiography. Therefore, the most reasonable is to infer that Jiu-Jitsu was born in Japan itself from demands immanent to the warrior activity and from the martial syncretism with the peoples who lived there [18].

Regarding the modern Jiu Jitsu, it has never changed nationality. It has been only singularized in its emphases due to the impacts of the competitive rules adopted in Brazil, mainly due to the absence of external pressures on the State of Brazil, as took place in Japan, in order to ban its practice and force the masters to readapt its principles according to the western paradigms of the New World Order [2]. So much so that the archetypal of samurai has always been widely referenced, including by those that many were mistakenly led to consider the precursors of Jiu Jitsu in Brazil.

Conclusion

Thus, it is not fair that, in order to value one's own merit regarding the particularities of accidental styles and deeds worthy of recognition, one tries to erase the legacy of other peoples, distorting their history and promoting misinformation among practitioners. It can be surely inferred that the BJJ brand and related ones are based on a historiographical fraud that has been doing a disservice to the multiple sectors dedicated to the study and improvement of Jiu Jitsu, by disconnecting it, in an oblique way, from the tradition from which it came and belongs to, so they cannot know the truth about the Martial Art which they practice.

References

1. Virgílio Stanlei. Conde Koma: o invencivel yondan da história. *Editora Átomo*. 2002.

2. Svinth Joseph. Documentation Regarding the Budo Ban in Japan, 1945-1950. *Journal of Combative Sport*. December. 2002.

3. Cháves Crézio. *o Jiu-Jítsu não tem nada de japonês, o Jiu Jitsu é indiano*. URL: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14NPrDEn_EVUfMrxezNDTcn7apOunlj8m?usp=sharing.

4. Rufino Luiz Gustavo Bonatto, MARTINS Carlos José. O jiu jitsu brasileiro em extensão. *Revista Ciência em Extensão*. 2011; 7(2): 84-101.

5. Andreato et. al. *A história do brazilian jiu-jitsu*. *Efdeportes*. Revista Digital - Buenos Aires - Año 14 - Nº 142 - Marzo de 2010.

6. Gracie Rodrigo. *The birth of gracie jiu-jitsu*. URL: <History – RODRIGO GRACIE JIU-JITSU>. Acesso em: 25 de Julho de 2022.

7. Sen Tansen. *Maritime Southeast Asia between South Asia and China to the sixteenth century*. TRaNS: Trans-Regional and-National Studies of Southeast Asia. 2014; 2(1): 31-59, 2014.

8. University of Pittsburgh. Y*ayoi Period (300 BCE – 250 CE)*. Japan Module (pitt.edu)

9. Shoda Shinya. A comment on the Yayoi period dating controversy. Bulletin of the society for East Asian archaeology, 2007; 1: 1-7.

10. Kennedy Brian, GUO, Elizabeth. *Chinese martial arts training manuals: a historical survey*. North Atlantic Books. 2005.

11. Green Thomas A. *Martial arts of the world: an encyclopedia of history and innovation*. Abc-Clio. 2010.

12. Turnbull Stephen. *The Samurai: a military history*. Routledge. 2013.

13. Kanazawa Eisaku, Yamada Hiroyuki. Japanese Dentition: Anthropology and History. *World Scientific*. 2020.

14. Sato Youichi et al. Overview of genetic variation in the Y chromosome of modern Japanese males. *Anthropological Science*. 2014; 122(3): 131-136.

15. Howell David L. Ainu ethnicity and the boundaries of the early modern Japanese state. *Past & Present*. 1994; 142: 69-93.

16. Kiyama Hideaki. Shakushain's Revolt of 1669: A study of a war between the Ainu and the Japanese. *Bulletin of College of Foreign Studies*. Yokohama: A combined. 1979; 1: 56-85.

17. *Mind over muscle: Writings from the founder of judo*. Kodansha International. 2005.

Submitted: 20.08.2022

Author's information:
Ronald Condé *- Escola Superior de Polícia Civil (ESPC), Curitiba, Brazil, e-mail: legacyofhonorhonor@gmail.com*