

ABSTRACT**Palcaty (Short sticks)****Old Polish fencing on sticks****(A historical study of the history of physical culture)**

Polish short stick is in itself a kind of a simple stick; in its history it has passed throughout various vicissitudes of destiny. From a stick serving in the XVIth century for an armoured inurement in the education of a young nobleman, through a stick constituting an element of physical exercise in Jesuit and Piarist schools in the XVIIth century, through the weapon used in palaestran frays in the XVII and XVIIIth centuries, the short stick reached the times of the Commission of National Education (1772 -1792), when it was officially recognised as a tool to serve the youths' physical development. Its role waned and with time disappeared alongside with the loss of independence and persistence of the Polish nation in captivity. Undertaken attempts to restore it as even a prop gymnastic cane in "Falcon nests" and various kinds of gymnastic associations or even at certain schools notwithstanding, the short stick had never regained its importance and the role it played in our pre-partition history . Endeavours to resurrect it has been taken until many years after World War II, in the eighties of the XXth century; presently, promising for the future, training and work on recreation of the old Polish fencing with Polish short stick continue in federations of Polish Martial Art Signum Polonicum.

This very PhD thesis is based on the experience the author has gained in the period of over thirty years, practical exercises in old Polish fencing with hussar sabre and Polish short stick as well as on a separate study of the extant written sources and iconography. The basis of practical training was and still is the knowledge the author has been attaining by study into sources, materials and all kind of information on the history, traditions and training in fencing with short sticks.

The lowdown and experience gained this way became the groundwork for recognizing that short sticks in their history and importance for our national culture and, above all, upbringing and physical culture, fully deserve that knowledge about them should be ordered in a scientific way in an integral, compact and demonstrative manner.

In accomplishing this goal, three basic goals were defined :

The first of these is to test the hypothesis that Poland had its indigenous - old Polish fencing with the short stick.

The second one is to determine the role short sticks played in our tradition and native history.

The third one is to check whether the short sticks have sufficient historical grounds as our native cultural heritage and thus whether they deserve the attempt to resurrect them as a Polish martial art, able to become the national martial art, a permanently present sport discipline in physical education.

Since this subject has neither been widely studied nor recognised and has not seen any coherent scientific work done, the studies had to be virtually started based mainly on diffused source material. During the research it turned out that the information on short sticks, stick fencing or fighting with sticks were to be found in many sources and source publications. It also quickly turned out they are scattered in the source texts and sources of such a large thematic span that reaching, collecting them and their organisation took plenty of time. As a result, it has lasted for over thirty years and still continues. However, the knowledge acquired and ordered to date is so comprehensive that it already allows a monographic presentation.

The implementation of this objective required application of several research methods. The study is interdisciplinary, relates primarily to the past, hence the usage of mainly historical methods . It also uses the descriptive method which belongs to the group of pre-scientific activities, consisting in the chronological arrangement of the described phenomena and events order; that was necessary to obtain proper degree of re-viewability and transparency.

The mainly applied method is the monographic one, used to study the essence of short sticks, its origin and application, taking into account the environments in which they were practiced and the conditions under which this martial art was developed.

Extremely helpful philological method allowed to read and interpret the meaning of written sources, such as reading chronicle texts by Marcin Bielski, Bartosz Paprocki, Jan Kochanowski, Mikolaj Rej, or Piotr Skarga, handwritten rules and military regulations from the XVIIIth century.

The retrogressive method was used as an auxiliary one (backward reasoning) because the XV and XVIth centuries did not leave many descriptions of short sticks use, especially in the field of training and education; it was necessary to assume that educational methods, where exercises with the stick were practiced in the XVIIth century (it is known from the descriptions by J. Sobieski) were also used in the XVIth century.

The study is constructed on the basis of chapters with the preservation of historical chronology. They are divided into the subsections constituting further development of the subject. It comprises of five chapters, each discussing a separate historical period with its own specificity in the short stick use, while essential for the development of Polish short sticks. Since that development has evolved in terms of short stick construction and application, beginning with the plain fighting stick and ending with a gym cane, it was dedicated separated subchapters to describe its use in detail.

The study begins with an introduction where basic hypotheses have been formulated; subsequently the author tries to prove their truth or falsity. The preface discusses used research methods, assesses scarce source base and literature; it also presents the substantive assumptions on how to solve research problems included in the study.

The first chapter analyses the sources and origins of the name "short sticks". An attempt was also made to present Polish short stick roots that date back to trials by ordeal times, stick fights and generally include pole weapon traditions.


The second chapter discusses the old Polish period, important for the formation of the Polish short stick, alongside with the role it played therein. Moreover, in this section the author makes reference to the first source of information about Polish short stick, its use types - especially in the educational process, in the chivalrous exercise practice, in duels and students' games.

The third chapter analyses processes which Polish short stick underwent that occurred in the XVIIIth century when it gained the greatest importance due to the fact it became a permanent element of schooling. By decision of the Commission of National Education fencing with the short stick was introduced to school curricula as an active recreation form. It was also the century when the process of stick exercises disappearance and fall of the Polish short stick began. This decadence was related to the loss of statehood and independence of Poland in 1795.

The fourth chapter focuses on the period of servitude and national uprisings. This is the time when developed gymnastics and various kinds of sports disciplines; however the Polish stick did not find its place amongst those and had not been reborn. There are also indicated several revival calls of the Polish stick herein and given examples some occurrences where existed traditions in stick fighting. These attempts did not succeed despite the fact that Polish society reborn spirit of sports and athletics, popularised especially in Falcon nests.

The fifth chapter concerns the XXth century and its wars; at the same time the period of regaining independence. Alongside with the Polish state rebirth arose the opportunity to resurrect the Polish stick, as yet it failed to do so despite the efforts made by physical culture authorities. Whilst analysing this conjuncture and the reasons for the lack of interest in the Polish short stick, the author points out the period in which the attempt to revive the Polish short stick was made by Signum Polonicum Club came after the Second World War.

The study ends with the summary of the set hypotheses. Analysis of research material confirm existence of traditional Polish short stick fencing. They also allowed to trace and present its evolution and various stages of its development. The author, based on studies and analysis of the collected source material, indicates existence of historical and educational basis for, hopefully successful this time, an attempt to revive Polish short sticks as a form of Polish national tradition and education.


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