

## Report on the first International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society (IMACSSS) Conference - "Game, Drama, Ritual in Martial Arts and Combat Sports"

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### REPORT

#### Abstract

The present report provides a brief account of the first conference of the International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society (IMACSSS), held in Genova (Italy) on June 8th-10th, 2012. There were 43 oral presentations and 15 posters divided into five themes: (1) Psychological dimensions of martial arts and combat sports (MA&CS); (2) Sociological and historical aspects of MA&CS; (3) Bio physical, bio technical and bio tactical issues in MA&CS; (4) Pedagogy and didactic methodologies in MA&CS; (5) Philosophical aspects, anthropological conceptions and taxonomy in MA&CS. The conference was a well-organised and unique meeting of MA&CS researchers with a wide variety of topics, international presence and expertise. It provided a good opportunity to consolidate and broaden scientific knowledge and research in MA&CS and contributed to the integration of the scientific community involved in their study.

**Keywords:** martial arts, combat sports, scientific research, scientific meetings, congresses, IMACSSS.

#### Informe sobre la International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society (IMACSSS) Conference - "Game, Drama, Ritual in Martial Arts and Combat Sports"

##### Resumen

El presente informe resume la primera conferencia de la International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society (IMACSSS), celebrada en Génova (Italia) entre los días 8 y 10 de junio de 2012. Se presentaron 43 comunicaciones orales y 15 pósters divididos en 5 áreas temáticas: (1) Dimensiones psicológicas de las artes marciales y deportes de combate (AM&DC); (2) Aspectos sociológicos e históricos de las AM&DC; (3) Aspectos biofísicos, bio-técnicos y bio-tácticos de las AM&DC; (4) Metodologías pedagógicas y didácticas en las AM&DC; y (5) Aspectos filosóficos, antropológicos y taxonómicos de las AM&DC. La conferencia fue un encuentro de investigación sobre AM&DC único y bien organizado, con una gran variedad temática, presencia internacional y nivel académico. Supuso una buena oportunidad para ampliar y consolidar el conocimiento e investigación científica sobre las AM&DC, y contribuyó a la integración de la comunidad científica implicada en su estudio.

**Palabras clave:** Artes marciales, deportes de combate, investigación científica, eventos científicos, congresos, IMACSSS.

#### Conclusão sobre a International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society (IMACSSS) Conference - "Game, Drama, Ritual in Martial Arts and Combat Sports"

##### Resumo

O presente artigo resume a primeira conferência da International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society (IMACSSS), realizada em Génova (Itália), entre os dias 8 e 10 de junho de 2012. Foram apresentadas 43 comunicações e 15 pósteres, divididos em 5 áreas temáticas: (1) Dimensões psicológicas das artes marciais e desportos de combate (AM&DC); (2) Aspectos sociológicos e históricos das AM&DC; (3) Aspectos biofísicos, biotécnicos e biotácticos das AM&DC; (4) Metodologias pedagógicas e didáticas das AM&DC; e (5) Aspectos filosóficos, antropológicos e taxonómicos das AM&DC. A conferência foi um encontro de investigação sobre as AM&DC, único e bem organizado, com uma grande variedade temática, presença internacional e nível académico. A sua realização foi uma boa oportunidade para ampliar e consolidar o conhecimento e investigação científica sobre as AM&DC, e para a integração da comunidade científica implicada no seu estudo.

**Palavras-chave:** Artes marciais, desportos de combate, investigação científica, eventos científicos, congresos, IMACSSS.

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## 1.- Introduction

Since the 1990's, there has been a growing interest in martial arts and combat sports research. Along with an increasing number of specific international journals reporting on martial arts research (e.g., *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, *Archives of Budo*, *Journal of Chinese Martial Studies*, *IDO Movement for Culture*, *Revista de Artes Marciales Asiáticas*, and *International Journal of Wrestling Science*), there has also been a significant growth in the number of scientific meetings devoted to martial arts and combat sports. During these last two decades, many scientific gatherings have been devoted to particular martial arts styles (e.g., "International Science of Judo Symposium"; "International Congress on Wrestling and Traditional Games"; "International Symposium on Science and Taekwondo"), though conferences on martial arts and combat sports in general can also be found (e.g., "World Congress on Combat Sports and Martial Arts", "International Scientific Conference of Experts – Researchers on Martial Arts and Humanists"). With regard to the latter, the first international conference of the International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society (IMACSSS) took recently place.

The present report is a brief analysis of the first IMACSSS conference entitled 'Game, Drama, Ritual in Martial Arts and Combat Sports'. This scientific meeting was organised by IMACSSS, the Unione Italiana Sportper tutti Area Discipline Orientali (UISP ADO), and the Laboratorio di Ricerca Sociale - Dipartimento di Scienze Motorie e della Salute Università di Cassino on June 8th-10th, 2012 in the impressive congress venue 'Palazzo Ducale' (Genova, Italy).

It is the first time since its foundation in 2010 that IMACSSS has proposed an international conference. The success of previous Martial Arts and Combat Sport Conferences in Rzeszów, Poland (2003, 2006 & 2010), Targowiska, Poland (2008) and Viseu, Portugal (2007, 2009 & 2011), provided good organisational models to follow and created an optimum environment of mutual collaboration among researchers from all over the world. As stated in the conference announcement, the central focus of the congress was the scientific interpretation of the fundamental connections among socio-cultural categories of game, drama and ritual in the context of martial arts and combat sports. These modes of interaction can be found in all kinds of sports, but in the specific context of martial arts and combat sports they are even richer in socio-cultural meaning than in the context of other physical activities.

## 2.- The First IMACSSS Conference

The IMACSSS congress brought together researchers and expert practitioners of martial arts and combat sports from 23 countries all over the world (e.g., Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Iran, Italy, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, USA). With more than 100 participants, three keynote speakers, eight sessions and 43 oral presentations and 15 posters the congress was a well organised and unique meeting for martial arts and combat sports researchers.

The IMACSSS conference started with a brief opening ceremony by representatives of IMACSSS, UISP ADO, Università di Cassino, and Genova Council. A plenary session followed immediately afterwards in which Nicola Porro from Italy presented an inaugural lecture on 'Sport and globalisation after the Western hegemony'. As president of the European Association for Sociology of Sport, he discussed the complex and demanding challenge of analysing globalisation from a sports perspective. During this first plenary session Kenji Tokitsu, from Japan, presented the second keynote address. In his lecture, Prof. Tokitsu discussed the difference between games of fighting, combat sports, and budo, and explained how these three forms of martial arts practice can blend into one another. The final keynote speaker, Xiong Xiaozheng from China, gave his lecture during the second plenary session at the beginning of the second day of the conference. This inaugural lecture was focused on the evolution of ancient Chinese martial arts, and the speaker discussed the transformation of cold weapon fighting skills to martial arts culture.

Obviously, the central theme of the conference, namely '*Game, drama and ritual in the context of martial arts and combat sports*', was scrutinised from different perspectives during the

inaugural lectures. This variety was also evident in the oral and poster presentations. Besides the diversity of scientific disciplines and martial arts styles, the conference covered a wide range of topics. All presentations were divided into the following five themes:

1. Psychological dimensions of martial arts and combat sports (5 oral and 3 poster presentations)
2. Sociological and historical aspects of martial arts and combat sports (16 oral and 3 poster presentations)
3. Bio physical, bio technical and bio tactical issues in martial arts and combat sports (13 oral and 4 poster presentations)
4. Pedagogy and didactic methodologies in martial arts and combat sports (3 oral and 4 poster presentations)
5. Philosophical aspects, anthropological conceptions and taxonomy in martial arts and combat sports (6 oral and 1 poster presentation)

The number of contributions (oral as well as poster presentations) in each section is given between brackets in the list of the five conference themes. As indicated above, a total of 43 oral and 15 poster presentations were given during the conference. The abstracts of these contributions can be found in the proceedings of the conference (Raimondo, Gutiérrez-García & Pérez-Gutiérrez, 2012). The wide range of presented topics demonstrated that international martial arts research has several dimensions and that different world regions offer different conditions for the development of martial arts research.

Along with the scientific component of the conference, an extensive and exciting cultural programme was also provided. Several demonstrations were held, including a judo demonstration by disabled persons, a kata demonstration by European and World champions and a Genoese stick fencing demonstration. On Saturday afternoon, all participants were free to attend an interactive and guided tour centred around the famous French painter and judoka, Yves Klein. The exposition was organised at the same venue as the IMACSSS conference to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Yves Klein.

From a more general perspective, it was remarkable how many young researchers and doctoral students presented their work during the conference. The interest of young people for martial arts research is encouraged by the IMACSSS through the introduction of a Young Researchers Award. As indicated by the IMACSSS, the aim of this award is to facilitate the integration of young researchers into the martial arts and combat sports scientific community, and to acknowledge high quality research. During the closing ceremony of the conference, the IMACSSS distributed awards for best contributions in 'Biological and Experimental Sciences' and 'Social Sciences and Humanities'. The Young Investigator Award in the former category was won by Isaac Estevan (Catholic University of Valencia, Spain) for his research on "Reaction and execution time analysis in the roundhouse kick according to different limits". The award in social sciences and humanities went to Jikkemien Vertonghen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium) for her research on "Type of guidance in martial arts: analysing different teaching approaches used by martial arts teachers".

Besides the presence of many young researchers, some world renowned martial arts and combat sports researchers also attended the conference. As the IMACSSS conference was not a mass congress, the presence of persons of renown created good interaction between researchers from different fields and with a wide variety of expertise and experience.

Unfortunately some researchers were not able to attend the conference due to the financial crisis that many countries are facing. In this perspective, efforts need to be made in order to make the attendance of future conferences as cheap as possible.

In conclusion, it can be said that the first IMACSSS conference made a significant contribution to the development of scientific knowledge and the international integration of research on martial arts and combat sports. Hopefully this initiative can now be consolidated and

will be extended by the 2<sup>nd</sup> IMACSSS International Conference, which will be organised in Tsukuba (Japan) on September 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, 2013 under the supervision of Prof. Fuminori Nakiri.

### Acknowledgements

The first IMACSSS international conference was a success, because it broadened scientific knowledge and improved interaction within the martial arts scientific community. The organising and scientific committees deserve to be congratulated for their invaluable contribution to this success. Special thanks also to Prof. Sergio Raimondo, who was the driving force behind the conference.

### References

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### Author's biographical data

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**Jikkemien Vertonghen** works as an assistant professor at the Department of Sports Policy and Management (Faculty of Physical Education and Physiotherapy) of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). In April 2011, Jikkemien received her PhD in Physical Education and Movement Sciences, in which she analysed contextual factors (i.e., structural qualities of martial arts, type of guidance, characteristics and social context of martial arts participants) in youth martial arts practice. Jikkemien's research interests are related to youth sports in general and martial arts practice in particular, educational and pedagogical opportunities of sports and positive youth development through sports. E-mail: [jikkemien.vertonghen@vub.ac.be](mailto:jikkemien.vertonghen@vub.ac.be)