

# PAUL BOWMAN, LAUREN GRIFFITH, BENJAMIN N. JUDKINS & WAYNE WONG

This journal is resolutely interdisciplinary. This is because the heterogeneous array of practices that make up what we so loosely term ‘martial arts’ give rise to diverse questions that require different methodologies from different disciplines. This has always been reflected in the range of articles that we accept and publish, and we are proud of our achievement in drawing scholars from so many different fields into a shared space for intellectual cross-fertilisation.

This open issue is exemplary of this ethos, and illustrative of the many vibrant areas of the field or fields we work in. It opens with a major study by distinguished capoeira scholar, Matthias Röhrig Assunção, titled ‘*Engolo* and Capoeira: From Ethnic to Diasporic Combat Games in the Southern Atlantic’. This is followed by the detailed historical study, ‘Shigeichi Yoshima’s Trajectory in the Promotion of Judo in Brazil’, by Rafael de Camargo Penteadó Borges and Gustavo Goulart Braga Maçaneiro. After this is the equally enlightening study of another untold history: ‘The British Ju-jitsu Society and the influence of *Kodokan Judo* on early *jujutsu* in the U.K.’, by David Brough, Slaviša Bradić, Mike Callan, Lance Gatling, and Llyr Jones. Then we flip disciplinary and methodological realms, with ‘An Exploratory Study on the Impact of Defensive Tactics Training on Police Recruits’ Self-Efficacy in Handling Violent Encounters’ by Jeremy M. Butler, Neha Gothe and Steven Petruzzello. Then, from the professional to the personal, we move to ‘Mixed Martial Arts As a Way of Life: Going Beyond The Black Belt And Engaging in Life-Long Learning’, by Shayna Minosky and Amanda Rose Dumoulin. Finally, we close with a significant new study by the world-renowned scholar of taijiquan history, Douglas Wile. This time, Wile turns to examine the topic that he terms ‘The Many Lives of Yang Luchan: Mythopoesis, Media, and the Martial Imagination’.

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Editorial

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These articles show a clear cross-section of the disciplinary diversity of martial arts studies today. They do not reflect all approaches or concerns constituting the field – not by a long way. But they show us some key coordinates in a collegial *topos*, in which cutting-edge work of critical historians rubs shoulders with new research into pragmatic and professional technical training, studies of lifestyle, and theoretical meta-reflections on the status of enduring cultural myths and icons.

In ‘*Engolo* and Capoeira: From Ethnic to Diasporic Combat Games in the Southern Atlantic’, Assunção provides a re-examination of the main Afrocentric narrative of capoeira origins, the *engolo* or ‘Zebra Dance’, in light of historical primary sources and new ethnographic evidence gathered during fieldwork in south-west Angola. By examining *engolo*’s bodily techniques, its socio-historical context and cultural meanings, the piece emphasises its insertion into a pastoral lifestyle and highlights the relatively narrow ethnic character of the practice in Angola. This analysis and the comparison with capoeira helps us to develop certain hypotheses about the formation, migration, and re-invention of diasporic combat games between southern Angola and coastal Brazil, and more broadly, to increase our understanding of how African cultures spread across the southern Atlantic.

In ‘Shigeichi Yoshima’s Trajectory in the Promotion of Judo in Brazil’, Borges and Maçaneiro begin by noting that the development and diffusion of judo in Brazil is attributed to a small group of Japanese immigrants living in the city of São Paulo. Their study seeks to present the importance of Shigeichi Yoshima and his role in the spread of judo in the countryside of São Paulo state. The results of their study substantiate that Yoshima arrived in Brazil in distinct circumstances from the majority of the immigrants and was a judo practitioner closely related to Kōdōkan Institute teachers and direct students of Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo. They argue that, as a specialised worker and university graduate with extensive experience in judo since his childhood, who might have had contact with the ground fighting specialists of the *kosen judo* movement, Yoshima represents a very unique group of Japanese immigrants to Brazil. They show how he was able to share his knowledge as a teacher when he started attending José Almeida Borges’ well-known *dōjō* in 1949 in Campinas and later through his close connection with the group of teachers Seisetsu Fukaya and Tatsuo Okochi, who were instrumental in structuring the São Paulo Judo Federation. The study demonstrates the importance of Japanese immigrants for the development of Brazilian judo through a micro-historical approach.

In ‘The British Ju-jitsu Society and the influence of *Kodokan Judo* on early *jujutsu* in the U.K.’, Brough, Bradić, Callan, Gatling, and Jones point out that in the United Kingdom (U.K.) in the late Victorian and early Edwardian eras there was an explosion in the popularity of the Japanese martial art *jujutsu*. Seemingly invincible Japanese exponents toured and took on all comers in the music halls. They show that, as

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this early wave of popularity subsided a number of organisations were established to continue the practice of *jujutsu*, and other Japanese martial arts. Most notable of these was the *Budokwai* in London, established in 1918 by Gunji Koizumi (which from 1920 would become one of the foremost *judo* clubs in the West). However, recent discoveries shed light on another organisation from this era called the British Ju-jitsu Society (BJS). Established in 1926, the BJS co-existed with the *Budokwai* and had member clubs throughout the U.K. Here, the authors provide an overview of the BJS, its activity, and insights into its operation and legacy.

In Butler, Gothe and Petruzzello's 'Exploratory Study on the Impact of Defensive Tactics Training on Police Recruits' Self-Efficacy in Handling Violent Encounters', the authors begin from the observation that police officers are often required to use physical force to effectively protect themselves as well as the public. To prepare officers for these physical demands, recruits receive training in defensive tactics and physical fitness during their Police Academy instruction. Their study aimed to explore the impact of martial arts training and police defensive tactics curricula on self-efficacy. It also aimed to develop a reliable scale for measuring an officer's self-efficacy and to use the scale to evaluate the impact of the Academy training on recruits' self-efficacy. They reveal that a very high proportion of the recruits in their study displayed an increase in self-efficacy post-training. Most of the participants credited the academy defensive tactics and fitness training with improving their self-efficacy. They argue that these results support the importance of martial arts and defensive tactics training on improving recruit officers' self-efficacy toward handling violent encounters prior to entering the law enforcement workforce.

Moving from the professional to the personal, Shayna Minosky and Amanda Rose Dumoulin offer a study of 'Mixed Martial Arts As a Way of Life'. In this qualitative study, the authors explored the experiences of 10 adults who trained in mixed martial arts (MMA), in order to understand the meaning they ascribed to attaining the black belt and their martial arts journey overall. Using a conventional content analysis, four themes were derived from the data: importance of the black belt, benefits of training in MMA, dealing with injuries, and being part of the MMA community. Training in MMA was regarded as very positive, with both individual benefits (improved physical and mental health, skill development, and personal growth) and interpersonal benefits (relationship development and sense of community) being reported. Self-determination theory and goal-setting theory were used by the authors to discuss participants' motivation in their pursuit of the black belt and continued training.

Finally, the issue ends with 'The Many Lives of Yang Luchan: Mythopoesis, Media, and the Martial Imagination' by Douglas Wile. Wile begins from the observation that the life of Yang Luchan, patriarch of the Yang lineage and founder of *taijiquan*'s most popular

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style, is a biographical blank slate upon which conservative, progressive, orientalist, and just plain rice bowl interests have inscribed wildly divergent narratives. He argues that conservative scholar-disciples sought to link him with the invented Wudang-Daoist lineage, while progressives emphasised his humble origins and the health benefits of the practice. His life (c.1799-1872) straddled the height of the Manchu empire and its decline into semi-colonial spheres of foreign influence, while successive generations of Yang descendants propagated his 'intangible cultural heritage' through Republican, Communist, 'open', and global eras. Practised world-wide by hundreds of millions, *taijiquan*'s name recognition made it ripe for media appropriation, and Yang Luchan has been remythologised in countless novels, cartoons, television series, and full-length feature films. Wile argues that the case of Yang Luchan offers an unusual opportunity to witness an ongoing process of mythopoesis and to compare these narratives with traditional Chinese warrior heroes and Western models of mythology and heroology. He proposes that if the lack of facts has not constrained the proliferation of invented biographies, neither should it discourage the quest for historical context as we sift and winnow truth from trope in the many reconstructions of Yang's life.

Interestingly, then, Wile returns us to several of the themes that emerge across the first three articles in this essay. The first is the value of knowing our history. What is the value in knowing the personal and professional histories of the leading figures within an art? There is something of value here beyond hero worship or the cult of personality. In many instances, we are inspired by the stories – verifiable or not – about martial artists who accomplish amazing feats like making their bodies invulnerable to attacks by mechanised weapons or reaching states of enlightenment through self-deprivation and masterful focus. But as we see in Borges's article, it is also valuable to attend to the more mundane experiences of these key individuals.

This brings us to the second theme, which addresses how these individuals set a trajectory for the generations of practitioners that came after them. What must it have been like for an immigrant to embark on a long journey to Brazil and enter into a highly diverse nation that welcomed Japanese immigrants as part of their branqueamento program while simultaneously discriminating against other immigrants, including other groups from Asia, who were seen as less desirable? What would it mean to share a Japanese art with Brazilians at this time where anthropophagy was embraced as a route to creating distinctly Brazilian cultural forms? These three articles demonstrate the importance of understanding the social conditions that shape the trajectories of our arts. This is especially clear in Assunção's article in which he provides not just context for better understanding the reception of capoeira in colonial Brazil, which is what most scholarship on capoeira has stressed, but the big picture of what was going on in the west coast of Southern Africa at this time. His careful attention to the history of this region offers a more realistic picture of what

the precursors to capoeira might have been. And while his findings may not necessarily square with what some capoeiristas want to hear, particularly if they are invested in some of the more extreme Afro-centric narratives that underpin current day practices, it is an important reminder that our understanding of these arts is often incomplete and should be open to revision pending the discovery of new information. It also raises questions about if and how writing forgotten peoples into the history of these arts might change their futures. What will contemporary practitioners do with this new information? Will it draw new practitioners into fields that they might otherwise not have felt compelled to join? Ultimately, putting new knowledge about the past into dialogue with contemporary practice leads to new questions and opportunities for future research.

The last theme that these articles address is the questions of identity. Though Butler and Gothe focused primarily on the question of self-efficacy, their work necessarily starts with an exploration of who these police recruits are. Their sample is diverse, including men and women of different ethnic backgrounds and ages who have varying degrees of familiarity with martial arts at the outset of their training. Their training improves self-efficacy, but one might ask what other aspects of their sense-of-self changes as a result of their newfound proficiency. Do they see themselves as being different people than they were at the outset of their training, or are they more focused on their demonstrable proficiency in the technical skills that will help them resolve physical conflicts? It is interesting to compare this against the individuals in Minosky and Dumoulin's study whose identities are very much affected by their membership within the MMA community and the status they have achieved within it. While less explicit than some of the other themes we have engaged here, another thing worth considering is how martial arts practices engender community, which is a theme that will be picked up in our next issue as well.

For their invaluable help in producing this issue, we would like to extend our thanks to: our contributors, for submitting their work to us; our hard-working and eternally collegial network of peer reviewers, who offer detailed feedback for no payment or reward other than the satisfaction of contributing to the development of scholarly discourse; and to two new additions to our team: first, our erstwhile assistant editor, Wayne Wong, is now a full editor. And second, Lucy Aprahamian joins us as designer, responsible for giving this journal its uniquely stylish layout. Thank you all.

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