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**Fifty years of martial arts periodicals  
published in Spain**

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## HISTORY

**Carlos Gutiérrez-García**, Ph.D., is an associate professor at the Faculty of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences of the University of León (Spain). He teaches some subjects related to judo and has been practising his sport since 1992, being 3<sup>rd</sup> dan at present. He directs the “Revista de Artes Marciales Asiáticas” [“Journal of Asian Martial Arts”] ([www.revistadeartesmarciales.com](http://www.revistadeartesmarciales.com)) and has published several works on judo, martial arts and combat sports.

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## Fifty years of martial arts periodicals published in Spain<sup>1</sup>

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**Key words:** martial arts history, historic sources, bibliographic description, cataloguing, content analysis

**Introduction:** Specialist periodicals are an important medium for the diffusion of the martial arts (MA) culture and image. Moreover, they offer great possibilities to MA historians and sociologists due to their periodicity, in contrast to other information sources like books, films or even oral sources. This study presents a preliminary catalogue of MA periodicals published in Spain, details the main bibliographic description elements of these periodicals, and briefly describes their main contents. A classification of MA periodicals according to this analysis is also provided.

**Methods:** The study was based on Javier Brieva's (a journalist and veteran martial artist) personal archives and several bibliographic databases of Spain like the National Library Catalogue, the Public Libraries Catalogue and the University Libraries Catalogue. The periodicals found in this search were then reviewed, analyzed and classified. Only some issues of each publication were analyzed due to the huge amount of existing periodicals.

**Results and discussion:** The results show a whole of 63 MA periodicals from 1961 (year of publication of *Actualidades Judo* [*Judo Current Affairs*], the first MA periodical published in Spain) to the present-day. Permanence and frequency of MA periodicals is extremely variable, from *El Budoka* [*The Budoka*] (1972-2009, 38 years, 393 issues) to the unique issue of *Tatami* (1978). Attending to their contents and typology the MA periodicals published in Spain can be classified in two main groups: a) federational, pseudo-federational or associational periodicals, edited by different federations, institutions or people linked to those federations/associations. Main contents in these periodicals are current news (competition results, federational news, interviews, etc.) and informative articles about MA promoted by that federation/association (e.g. judo, karate); b) market-oriented periodicals, on sale in kiosks and bookshops, with general-interest (MA in general) or specialized (one or several MA in particular) contents. Usually, informative articles and current news are combined in these journals with very different degrees and levels of depth depending on the editorial policy of the journal. To a lesser extent there are also examples of other types of MA periodicals, like scientific-

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> *World Scientific Congress of Combat Sports and Martial Arts* (September 17-19, 2010, University of Rzeszów, Poland). The MA periodicals list presented here is comprehensive but not complete, as it does not include some old and/or narrowly distributed periodicals. These will be added to the list in the future as discovered, or if brought to our attention.

technique journals or periodicals focused on relevant people of MA.

Conclusions: This research project had the outcome of a list of more than 60 martial arts periodicals published in Spain from 1961 down to the present day. This list is the only one of its type and implies a step forward in the locating and recording of resources useful for research into the history of martial arts in Spain.

Finally, it could be said that many initiatives for the publication of MA periodicals have been implemented from the 1960s, although these initiatives have seldom consolidated along the time. For the understanding of this fact, it should be taken into account both internal (lack of institutional support, specialized staff, etc.) and external (difficulty for getting certain economic profitability due to the great specificity of the several MA and schools) factors.

## Introduction

Specialist journals and magazines are an important medium for the diffusion of the martial arts (MA) culture and image. Moreover, they offer great possibilities to MA historians and sociologists, owing to their periodicity, in contrast with other information sources like books, films or even oral sources. Through the pages of martial arts journals and magazines it is possible to observe aspects such as the activities carried out by the institutions linked to these publications, the types of practice that they promote, the introduction of new practices and styles in martial arts, conflicts in the martial arts world or even the changes in the market affecting such activities.

Despite their undeniable value for those researching the history of sport (according to Morrow and Waters [1982] there is an implicit acceptance that periodicals constitute the main and commonest source for the sports history), many periodicals and journals with a sports theme have not been treated well. As was pointed out by Cox [1994, pp. 35-36],

"Unfortunately, many popular sports magazines and newspapers have been discarded by the governing bodies and libraries which produced or subscribed to them because they were not considered very important in the long term future. [...] Because many of the sports periodicals were published privately by the governing bodies and circulated only to members, only a small proportion of those which existed found their way into major library collections".

In the case of martial arts periodicals this statement is dramatically accurate, with a striking lack of this type of source being noted in the main Spanish centres for documentation. Fortunately, thanks to the relatively recent birth of this sort of publication, there are many martial arts practitioners who still have in their personal libraries or files copies of martial arts periodicals. Furthermore, there are references to some of these publications on the internet, which allows their existence to be detected and processes of search and recovery initiated.

This study presents a preliminary catalogue of MA periodicals published in Spain, details the main bibliographical features of these publications, and briefly describes their main contents. It does so, on the basis of seeing martial arts periodicals as valuable sources, of particular sensitivity with regard to historical developments. It follows the lines of authors writing on the history of Asian martial arts in Spain and the West [see *e.g.* Acevedo, Gutiérrez, Cheung 2010; Gutiérrez 2003, 2006; Gutiérrez, Espartero 2004; Gutiérrez, Pérez 2009a; Gutiérrez, Rosa, Pérez, 2010; Pérez, Gutiérrez 2008; Villamón, Brown, Espartero, Gutiérrez 2004].

## Methods

The object of study of this paper is the periodicals specifically for MA published in Spain down to the present day. Although sharing an "overall" definition of MA as "systems that blend the physical components of combat with strategy, philosophy, tradition, or other features that distinguish them from pure physical reaction" [Green, Svinth 2010, p. xix], it will confine itself to Asian MA, in accordance with the concept of MA normally used in the literature in Spanish; see, for example, Villamón and Espartero [1999], Pérez and Gutiérrez [2008]. Publications on combat sports not of Asian origin, such as boxing or fencing, or traditional Spanish sports, such as Leonese or Canary Islands wrestling, do not form part of this study, as they have a typology and in some cases a lengthy history which make them worthy of separate consideration; see Altabella [1988], Puxadas and Santacana [1997]. Similarly, only those periodicals whose main topic is martial arts are considered. Hence, for instance, those which are primarily on sports in general are excluded, as are those on oriental cultures with sections given over to MA.

Once the subject under study had been properly defined, the production of the catalogue of publications involved a long and complex procedure, owing to the previously mentioned difficulty in locating and consulting sources. The starting point was the vast personal holdings of Javier Brieva (a

journalist and veteran MA practitioner), from which details of 31 periodicals were drawn, many of these totally absent from the main Spanish periodical archives. For older references, the work of Gutiérrez [2003] was also consulted. Secondly, a number of bibliographical databases in Spain were scanned, such as the National Library Catalogue, the Public Libraries Catalogue and the University Libraries Catalogue, after which the copies held were directly consulted. For electronic publications, the starting point was references collected by the authors over the recent years, combined with a fresh intensive trawl for new references. Finally, an attempt was made to contact publishers and collectors of those periodicals for which only incomplete information was available, the response to this being somewhat uneven.

Even so, owing to a range of factors such as the irregular or ephemeral nature and limited circulation of many periodicals, their absence or incomplete presence in libraries, or their disappearance from the internet in the case of e-journals, an appreciable number of pieces of data could not be confirmed. Likewise, because of the large numbers of periodicals in existence (some 60 journals and 1,600 issues), only certain issues were analysed for each publication.

## Results and discussion

The research carried out had as its result the identification of a total of 63 MA periodicals published in Spain from 1961 (the year of publication of *Actualidades Judo* [*Judo News*], the first MA periodical published in Spain) down to the present day. Table 1 contains a listing of these publications in a chronological order, giving certain details of use for documentary analysis, including the following:

- a. *Years of Publication*: The years in which the first and last issues of the magazine or journal came out, whether or not it appeared at regular intervals and whether or not there are any “empty” intermediate years.
- b. *Issues Published*: The total number of issues that came out during the years over which the title was published.
- c. *Pages per Issue*: The approximate number of pages in each of the issues of the publication.
- d. *Main Topic of Journal*: The martial art or arts constituting the central core of the contents of the publication. This does not exclude the possibility of articles on other MA appearing as secondary matter. The label “generic” is used for the periodicals which cover the whole world of MA.

- e. *Type of Journal*: On the basis of the institution that published or promoted the periodical, a distinction was made between federational periodicals (published by international, national, or local federations), pseudo-federational periodicals (published by sections or departments within federations, or individuals very closely linked to such federations), associational periodicals (published by martial arts associations or clubs), and market-oriented magazines or journals (those aimed primarily at commercial sales).

The indication of the type of periodical was particularly problematic, as there have been many federational, pseudo-federational and associational publications which have had a certain commercial flavour (being sold to the general public, or carrying consumer advertising). Similarly, there have been a number of market-oriented magazines which have maintained close ties with associations or federations, or which at certain points in their life have been published on a non-commercial basis. Furthermore, the market-oriented character of a periodical cannot be based exclusively on whether it was sold to the general public, since there are free journals, both printed and especially digital, with a large amount of advertising material on their pages. This involves their sources of finance, so that they can also be classified as commercial. In the light of these limitations, it is clear that this indicator is not an absolute, but points to the greater weight of one or another of the strands on the basis of a general analysis.

In accordance with their contents, MA periodicals published in Spain can be roughly classified into two main groups: a) *federational, pseudo-federational or associational periodicals*; and b) *market-oriented periodicals*. Within these two groups, there are striking differences between the various publications.

*Federational, pseudo-federational or associational periodicals* focus their contents mainly on current news, such as competition reports (especially in the case of those institutions actively promoting the sporting and competitive side of MA, for instance national sports federations) and federation or association news (for example, publicity for, or reports on, courses and training schemes for participants, coaches and referees; activities promoting the sport; elections to, and changes in their governing bodies; collaboration with other institutions and the like). To a lesser degree, they normally include other sorts of contents, like interviews with prominent figures, informative articles about the MA promoted by the federation or association question, information about reference

Table 1. Specific Martial Arts periodicals published in Spain up to 2009

Name	Y	I	P	MF	Type
1	2	3	4	5	6
Actualidades Judo	1961-62	13	20-24	Judo	Pseudo-federational
Judo. Boletín del Colegio de Cinturones Negros	1962-64	3	10-30	Judo	Pseudo-federational
Judo. Revista Oficial del Colegio Español de Cinturones Negros	1965	2	24	Judo	Pseudo-federational
Judo. Federación Castellana Centro. Boletín Informativo	1966-70	15	16-63	Judo	Federational (local)
Boletín Informativo. Federación Española de Judo	1967-69?	7?	≈ 24	Judo	Federational (national)
Judo. Revista de la Federación Española de Judo	1970-77	39	≈ 32-60	Judo	Federational (national)
El Budoka ( <i>prev. other titles</i> )	1972-2009	393	≈ 24-60	Generic	Market-oriented
Revista de la Federación Internacional de Judo ( <i>prev. other title</i> )	1973-77	13	≈ 16-32	Judo	Federational (international)
Dojo ( <i>prev. other title</i> )	1977-2007	359	≈ 50	Generic	Market-oriented
Eien	1978	7	63	Japanese MA	Market-oriented
Judo España	1978-79	7?	45	Judo	Pseudo-federational
Tatami	1978	1	?	Generic	Market-oriented
Taekwondo	1981-82	8	36	Taekwondo	Pseudo-federational
Choy-Li-Fut Chia	1982-86?	7?	≈ 46	Choy Li Fut	Associational
Kata. Revista de las Artes y las Ciencias Marciales	1982-83	7	≈ 66	Generic	Market-oriented
El Dan	1982-86	16	≈ 24	Judo	Federational (national)
World Taekwondo	1983-85	14	?	Taekwondo	Pseudo-federational
Cuadernos T.E.A.M.	1985-88	10	20-48	Generic	Associational
Sensei no Shiori	1986	6	?	Ninjutsu	Associational
Judo A.N.P.E.J.	1987-92	5	24-32	Judo	Associational
Décimo Dan	1986-91	52?	≈ 64	Generic	Market-oriented
Karateka	1986-92	45?	≈ 32-42	Karate	Federational (national)
Judo Castilla y León	1986-88	4?	26	Judo	Federational (local)
FEJyDA Contact ( <i>prev. other title</i> )	1987-91?	17?	≈ 24	Judo	Federational (national)
Sensei	1988	7	80	Generic	Market-oriented
Cinturón Negro	1988-Now	230	≈ 60-90	Generic	Market-oriented
Taekwondo Team	1989-91	18?	46-72	Taekwondo	Federational (national)
Kyoku	1989-91	6	24	Karate	Associational
Judo Prensa	1989-2004	24	≈ 40	Judo	Market-oriented
Meijin	1991?	1?	28	Jiu-jitsu	Federational (local)
Vía Marcial: Tu revista canaria de artes marciales	1991	1?	≈ 24	Generic	Market-oriented
Zanshin	1992-94	6?	≈ 30	Generic	Market-oriented
Judo	1992-99?	13?	26-40	Judo	Federational (national)
Tai-jitsu: Revista semestral gratuita	1993	2?	40-52	Tai-jitsu	
Combate: Revista del Club Deportivo AM y DC Oriente Asturias	1995	2	15-31	Generic	Associational
Revista de la Asociación Deportiva Budokan	1995-2006	11	19-36	Karate	Associational
Golden Drangon	1996-2006	32	≈ 32-54	Chinese MA	Market-oriented
Taekwondo Magazine	1997	2	22-30	Taekwondo	Market-oriented
Yin Yang: Boletín sobre las artes del Lejano Oriente	1997-2009	23	≈ 10	Chinese MA	Associational
Stilo: La Revista de la Asociación Catalana de Kárate Kyokushinkai	1998?	6?	≈ 11	Karate	Associational
El Púgil	1997-98?	3?	≈ 28	Contact Sports	Associative
Taekwondo. Revista informativa	1998-99?	6?	32-60	Taekwondo	Federative (national)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Sensei: Boletín del Instituto de Artes Marciales Filosóficas Bodhidharma	2000?	1?	18	Generic	Associational
Ronin: Fanzine Dedicado a las artes marciales y cultura oriental	2000-02?	10?	≈ 32-36	Generic	Market-oriented
Judo	2001-05	11	8-32	Judo	Federational (national)
Yojimbo “El Guardaespaldas”	2000-09	15	10-28	Japanese MA	Associational
Crosscombat	2003-07	25	≈ 52	Mixed MA	Market-oriented
Artes guerreras.com	2003-07?	38?	30-34	Generic	Market-oriented
El Club de la Lucha ( <i>prev. Neo</i> )	2003-08	45?	≈ 50-66	Generic	Market-oriented
Fightsport	2004-05	7	?	MMA	Market-oriented
Tai Chi Chuan. Revista de Artes y Estilos Internos	2004-Now	20	67	Internal MA	Market-oriented
Bao Yi: Boletín de la Asociación Bao Yi de Tai Chi Chuan y AM Internas	2005	1	31	Internal MA	Associational
Revista de Artes Marciales Asiáticas	2006-Now	16	90-120	Generic	Market-oriented
Club Shotokan Ciudad Real. Boletín Informativo	2006-Now	34	4-15	Karate	Associational
Kenshinkan Dojo: revista de artes marciales	2007	1?	19	Generic	Associational
Tatamikos	2007?	2?	≈ 30	Judo	Market-oriented
Zanshin	2007-08	2?	8	Karate	Associational
Eki	2008	2?	5?	Generic	Associational
Judo España	2008-?	1	103	Judo	Federational (national)
Bruce Lee Manía	2008-Now	3	≈ 60	Bruce Lee	Associational
Bushido: El periódico gratuito de las artes marciales	2009-Now	2	16	Generic	Market-oriented
Nitai	2009-Now	5	12-20	Tai-jitsu	Federational (national)
Asoc. Catalana de Choy Li Fut, Tai Chi Chuan, Chikung. Boletín informativo gratuito	2009-Now	2	4	Chinese MA	Associational

materials (books, DVDs) or advertising for MA courses and businesses.

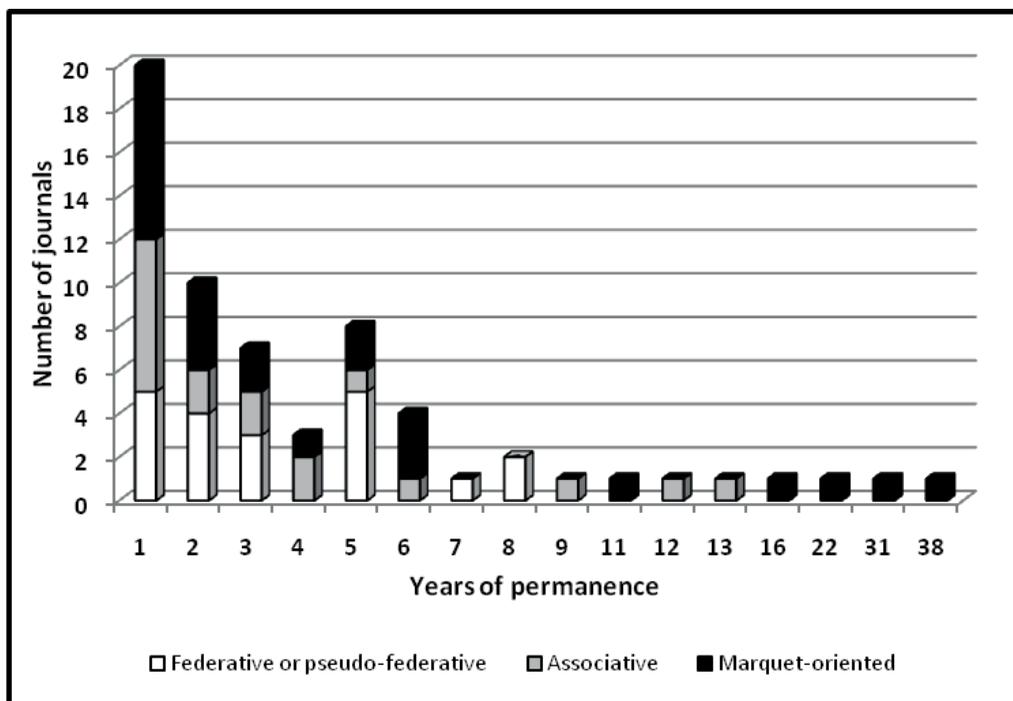
*Market-oriented periodicals* may be divided into generic MA magazines (promoting MA in general, e.g. *El Budoka*, *Dojo*, *Cinturón Negro*) or specialist magazines (promoting one MA or several in particular, for example *Judo Prensa*, *Golden Dragon*, *Tai Chi Chuan*). The main contents of this type of periodicals tend to be articles on various aspects of MA with very different degrees and levels of depth depending on the editorial policy of the publication. Because of the breadth of their topic, generic MA magazines usually publish much shorter articles than do specialist periodicals, although exceptions do occur, such as the scientific-technical journal *Revista de Artes Marciales Asiáticas*. Furthermore, amongst their usual contents are reports on schools or masters, interviews and advertising for courses and equipment connected with MA. To a lesser extent, they normally also include news about competitions and articles or advertising relating to activities complementary to MA (for instance, massage, acupuncture, and so forth).

The lifespan and frequency of appearance of MA periodicals is extremely variable, running from *El Budoka* (1972-2009, 38 years, 393 issues) to the

single issues of *Tatami* (1978) and *Bao Yi* (2005). As Graph 1 shows, the great majority of periodicals (87.3%) remained in publication for fewer than ten years, 63.5% of them for three year or less. Most of the publications that have lasted for more than ten years are commercial in nature, although there have also been quite a few market-oriented magazines whose lifespan has been very short.

As an interpretation of this situation, it would seem that the lack of stability in the sector is due fundamentally to the fact that federational, pseudo-federational and associational periodicals, despite having the support of the institutions publishing them, rely essentially on individual people working on a voluntary, unpaid basis, and cannot count on an organized team with a clear-cut arrangement for assignment of work and replacement of team members. As was pointed out by Javier Fernández Bravo [2010], the director of *Club Shotokan Ciudad Real. Boletín Informativo* and *Nitai*,

The problem for these periodicals is that people take on their publication in an altruistic way, for the satisfaction of seeing the work done and collaborating on something in which they believe, whilst institutional webs have somebody who is paid to keep them up to date and to insert contents.



Graph 1. Lifespan of MA Periodicals (Years)

Simultaneously, political factors (for instance, changes in the presidency of a national federation, with the consequent alterations in structures, human resources, policies and the like) have usually worked against any stability in this type of publications: see, for example, Gutiérrez [2003] with regard to the earliest judo periodicals.

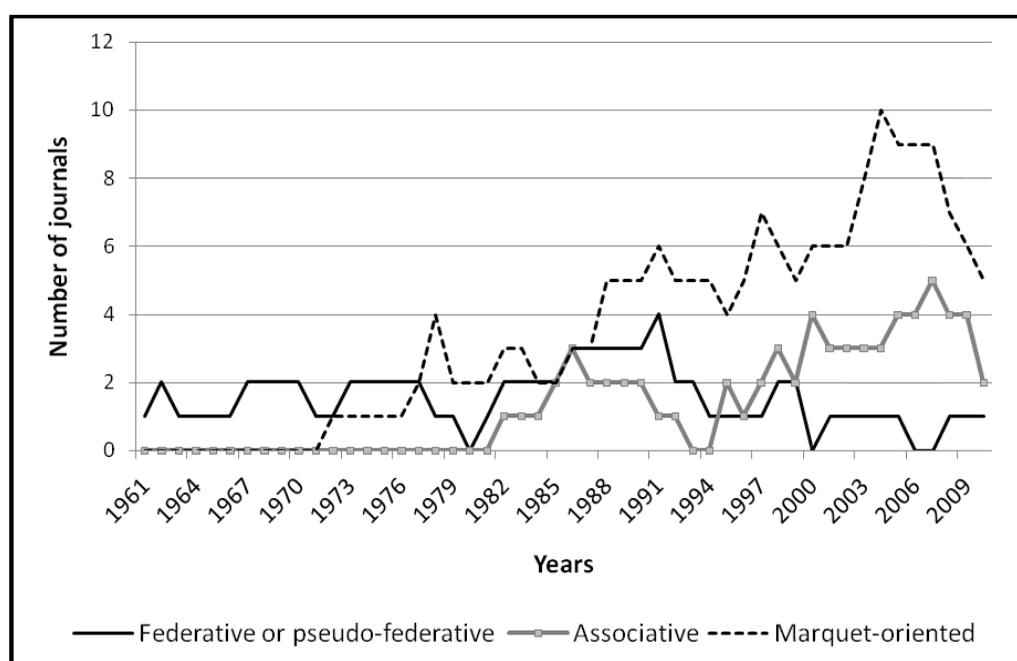
As for commercial publications, their lifespan has been affected by the laws governing a limited, difficult and competitive market. In general terms, and drawing on experience, among other aspects the following are factors making life hard for them:

- Martial arts practitioners are not usually interested in “martial arts fads” (that is, they do not follow the martial art that is in fashion for the moment, such, for instance, as Brazilian capoeira or mixed martial arts). Rather, they tend to practise one single martial art for a considerable time, in accordance with the philosophy of many of the martial arts themselves [Donohue 2005]. These practitioners prefer specific knowledge of the art that they practise, which is more easily found in books than in generic publications;
- Despite the noteworthy scientific developments of recent years [Gutiérrez, Pérez 2009b], this is still a traditionalist field of knowledge, not much given to innovation, where it is difficult to gather original contributions in a short period of time;
- This is a field of knowledge fundamentally tied to practice (techniques and tactics), transmission of which in printed form is, to say the least, problematic [Lang 2008];

- There are in the martial arts elements of authoritarianism, anti-intellectualism, particularism (sectarianism), doctrinaire rigidity and narrowness of focus [Levine 1994], which can lead to a likelihood that the plurality of contents and opinions typical of what is in magazines might be rejected; and
- In many instances, market-oriented publications have been characterized by being based around a small team of staff, which has brought major limitations to areas such as the production of copy, publishing, distribution, marketing, and the like.

A different form of time-based analysis relates to the larger or smaller numbers of martial arts periodicals in existence at different points as time goes by (see Graph 2). As may be seen, the first sorts of periodical to appear were federational and pseudo-federational publications in the 1960s. Although there are in Spain four national sports federations covering martial arts (judo, karate, taekwondo and kick-boxing), which usually have taken under their wing various associated sports, so that, for instance, aikido, jiu-jitsu, kendo, wushu and nihon tai jitsu are sports associated with the Spanish Federation for Judo and Associated Sports (RFEJDA), only RFEJDA has managed to achieve a certain continuity in the publication of more than one periodical. Both the Spanish Karate Federation and the Spanish Taekwondo Federation have published periodicals, although they lasted only short periods.

Secondly, the next type to appear was commercial magazines, during the 1970s. As



Graph 2. Number of MA Periodicals in Existence by Year

pointed out in work by García [1990, 1997], this was a period of considerable expansion in the practising of sports in Spain. In particular, the popularity of martial arts reached a high point through major factors such as the worldwide boom in martial arts films [Fu, Desser, 2000; Hunt 2003] or the continuous growth in the number of practitioners and schools of judo [Villamón, Brousse 1999], karate [Herráiz 1990] and other martial arts that were progressively introduced into Spain. Sparked by this, a market arose for martial arts magazines with historic and quite long-lived publications such as *El Budoka* (1972 to 2009) or *Dojo* (1977 to 2007). During the next few decades this sort of periodical continued to be on the increase, although only one or two magazines, such as *Cinturón Negro* (1988 to date), succeeded in keeping afloat for more than a year or so. The cases of *Judo Prensa* (1989 to 2004) and *Golden Dragon* (1996 to 2006) were somewhat special, in that the first had a major gap in its publication record, while the second ceased operating on a commercial basis at the start of 2000.

In recent years, despite the appearance of new publications, there seems to be evidence of a deep crisis in the market for commercial martial arts magazines, leading to the closure of long-standing publications such as *El Budoka* or *Dojo*, as mentioned above, and to the failure of new initiatives. The root causes of this crisis are to be sought in the economic difficulties that have been affecting all of Spanish society. Although current technology allows electronic periodical to be prepared at a much lower cost than is the case for conventional paper publications, and in addition

facilitate their diffusion, the problems facing the whole of the sports system linked to martial arts (practitioners, clubs, manufacturers, distributors, shops, and others) has drastically decreased the number of commercial martial arts magazines on the market.

Finally, associational publications began to appear in the 1980s. They were normally short-lived, with the only exceptions being *Revista de la Asociación Deportiva Budokan* (1995 to 2006), *Yin Yang* (1997 to 2009) and *Yojimbo "El Guardaespaldas"* (2000 to 2009). Moreover, this sort of periodical has not succeeded in becoming consolidated as a means for transmitting information to members. In their place, both associations and federations have chosen other methods, such as conventional web pages or blogs, which are possibly better suited than periodicals for the sort of information that these institutions wish to transmit, besides being much more rapidly updated. By way of an example, Carlos Garrachón, director of the *Revista de la Asociación Deportiva Budokan* (1995 to 2006), said with respect to this publication,

From 2006 the magazine ceased publication, because the means for communication between members became the web-site of the Budokan Karate Association, [www.karatebudokan.es](http://www.karatebudokan.es), which is where we publicize our activities, publish articles, and so on.

The existence of a periodical may also be interpreted as a question of image (promoting a brand or a corporate profile), which would be additional to the informative value of the publication. Furthermore, in the case of digital

publications, this is a product that can be sent directly to the distribution lists of the body involved without consumers having to intervene actively (that is, seek out information for themselves on the internet).

## Conclusions

This research project had the outcome of a list of more than 60 martial arts periodicals published in Spain from 1961 down to the present day. This list is the only one of its type and implies a step forward in the locating and recording of resources useful for research into the history of martial arts in Spain.

On the basis of an analysis of its contents, it is possible to differentiate between federational, pseudo-federational or associational periodicals, on the one hand, and market-oriented magazines, on the other, although it should be stressed that there is considerable variability within these groups. In terms of time-span, it may be said that numerous initiatives for the publication of MA journals have been put in place since the 1960s, although these initiatives have seldom been consolidated over time. To understand this situation, account should be taken of both internal factors (such as lack of institutional support, or of specialized staff) and external factors (for instance, the difficulty in achieving financial profitability caused by the great specificity of the various MA and schools within them).

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## 50-lecie wydawania w Hiszpanii czasopism sztuk walki

**Słowa kluczowe:** historia sztuk walki, źródła historyczne, opis bibliograficzny, katalogowanie, analiza treści

### Streszczenie

Niniejsza praca prezentuje wstępny katalog periodyków dotyczących sztuk walki publikowanych w Hiszpanii. Zawiera główne elementy bibliograficzne owych pism i w skrócie opisuje ich zawartość. Znajduje się tu także klasyfikacja periodyków. Rezultaty dotyczą 63 pism wydawanych między rokiem 1961 a 2009. Częstotliwość pojawiania się czasopism o sztukach walki oraz ich stałość na rynku wydawniczym są bardzo zróżnicowane. Periodyki hiszpańskie dotyczące sztuk walki mogą być podzielone na 2 główne grupy: a) związkowe/federacyjne albo pseudo-związkowe. Treść tych czasopism obejmuje aktualne wiadomości (rezultaty zawodów, wiadomości związkowe, wywiady itp.) oraz artykuły informacyjne o promocji sztuk walki przez federację/związek; b) periodyki skierowane do szerszego grona odbiorców, które są do kupienia w kioskach i księgarniach, o ogólnej lub szczegółowej tematyce dotyczącej sztuk walki. Zazwyczaj artykuły informacyjne i aktualne wiadomości pojawiają się razem w tych czasopismach oraz charakteryzują się różnym poziomem i dogłębnością informacji w zależności od polityki wydawniczej danego czasopisma. Istnieją także nieliczne przykłady innych periodyków dotyczących sztuk walki o sprecyzowanych profilach np. naukowo-techniczne lub koncentrujące się na profilach ludzi związanych z tymi sportami.

Wiele publikacji zostało zapoczątkowanych w latach 60-tych chociaż rzadko utrzymały się do obecnych czasów. Związane to było z czynnikami wewnętrznymi (brak zinstytucjonalizowanego wsparcia, brak specjalistów w dziedzinie sztuk walki) lub zewnętrznymi (trudności z uzyskiwaniem zysku ze szkół walki).