

ARMA Scholar Study Program

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Long-sword terms

- Period long-sword typology (blade geometry & styles, forms & functions)
- Sword Anatomy (parts name & function): long/true edge, short/false edge, cross, pommel, shoulder, ricasso, point, edge, strong, weak, divisions of the blade, etc.
- Fechtschulen/Fechtmasters & Masters of Defence (full title, author name, nationality, date, significance of several key primary ones).
- Long-sword Forms: langenschwert, spada longa, espadon, epee' du guerre/war-sword, sword of war, grete swerd/grans espees, bastard sword/espee bastarde, hand-and-a-half, spadone, two-hand swerde, spada da due mani/espée a deure mains, Bidehänder/Dopplehänder, estoc, stocco, tuck, Dreiecker, Panzerstecher.

"Tipprogressions" - Stance Transitions

Practice of transitioning from fighting position to fighting position with coordination, proper form, and fluidity. This basic solo exercise is the beginning of handling most all weapons using the same fundamental positions. Ability to change from one to the other or shift into any as techniques and actions are performed is a vital component of skill. We borrow the term itself from Achille Marozzo's 1536 work, Opera Nova, wherein he taught a preliminary exercise of moving through a consecutive series of guard positions. Hints of similar exercises can arguably be discerned from source manuals and literature of the period. This flowing transitioning from ward to ward and cut to cut sounds very similar to what we understand as the beginnings of a florysh (and Marozzo may very well have meant the term in that regard. But for our needs we will appropriate it for learning the basic motions of warding in ready postures or stances). While the action of changing fighting stances in execution of offensive or defensive actions is used as an exercise, it also forms the basis of the florysh exercise.

(Leger/Posta/Ward/Guardia/Guard): Perform 5 core positions with proper form and fluid transition motion from one to another (i.e., tipprogressions). Knowing additional secondary stances and half-swording postures are suggested and welcome.

Alternate Names for Guards: High (Oberhut); Low (Porto di Ferrro Mezanna – "Middle Iron Door"); Ochs (Finestra "Window") which are Monte's "Prima" and "Seconda"; Posta di Donna Altera ("Woman's" or "proud woman's guard") which is also Vom Dach over the shoulder

Snapping

A simple exercise for developing quick natural transitions and cutting motions.

Covering Motions - "Coverta Motus" Exercise

This new solo exercise combines together many actions into a simple and effective way to practice and apply key elements. It integrates warding, striking, stepping, and transitioning with frequent motion. See: Our Coverta Motus Exercise

Winding the Crown - Wind and Bind Exercise

Learning to deliver combination cuts and counter-cuts along the lines of the segno ultimately requires applying them as windings from the bind in the crown. This solo exercise is an ideal and simple way of developing those valuable assets of fluidity, coordination, speed, and deception to execute these actions. See the Winding Crown video sample here.

Stepping Exercise - Basic Footwork

Some very fundamental but crucial ways to step and move in different directions develop agility, balance, and nimble motion essential to all close combat.

Floryshing

Whether considered as Spiegelfechten ("mirror fighting") or "fighting a shadow" (skiamachia), the solo performance of spontaneous unrehearsed combinations of striking and stepping motions delivered with good energy, tempo, and form is one of the most useful and important ways of training. Every student of this art should be capable of floryshing with competency.

It must be executed in earnest – proper focus, tempo, speed, energy and emotional content during testing. Include core stances, strikes, deflections, transitioning, employed with stepping and passing. Display cuts, thrusts, slices, feints, and setting aside, with proper footwork, stance transitions, feinting, changing in tempo and rhythm or direction, good eye focus, and vocalization. Floryshing is not about performing a set series of prearranged movements, but about freely exercising ability to combine motions and actions.

Half-Swording

Learning to deliver combination cuts and counter-cuts with half-swording requires applying them with certain adeptness. This solo exercise is a simple and ideal way of developing proficiency in these particular actions. Half-swording is an integral part of the longsword but directly applies to all hafted weapons. Doing these simple motions provides a keen means of easily working on such actions when training alone.

Halb Schwert/Mezza Spada (half-sword guards) – Serpentino; Breve Serpentino; Serpentino Superiore; Sagittaria; Posta Vera Croce; Posta Croce Bastarda; assorted reversed & "palmed" guards.

Pelling - Striking at the Post

The pell is the "punching bag" of historical fencing. It is the one essential item of training every student should have access to. Having a target to practice hitting on is the only way to really learn to aim and control your blows to develop a sense of force and power.

See also: <http://www.thearma.org/essays/pells.htm>
<http://www.thearma.org/essays/pell/pellhistory.htm>

Free Play

Whether it is called sparring or fighting practice or free play, in the study of a serious fighting art some form of mock combat bouting is essential for learning how to act and react. The adversarial counter-timing and tactical application of actions that occur in this way is never equaled through partnered drills and solo exercises. From Fechtschule prize playings, tournaments al plaisance, to bouting a friendly "veney" and more, the historical evidence for free-play as a training tool within historical European martial arts is unequivocal and undeniable. The ARMA has long stressed free play as a training tool for learning the craft, not an end in itself or as a sporting competition. Many video examples of this as well as guidelines for safe realistic practice are included throughout our site.

Test Cutting

There is historical evidence for cutting practice in historical European fencing but, as with so much else it was never something institutionalized or ritualized. At some point in your study of historical swordsmanship you need to experience actually cutting into and through resistant realistic materials with a quality sharp reproduction blade. The experience is nothing short of enlightening. Practicing it as an exercise from time to time will result in a far keener understanding and appreciation of what is involved in close combat with bladed weapons, as well as how cuts are truly performed and what they are really capable of doing. Test cutting is dangerous though, and often problematic. It is highly

susceptible to the quality of the weapon used, its edge composition, the skill of the user, and the type of target material (which cannot be flimsy or insubstantial). See some samples here.

Abrazzare

12 Rules of Fencing

Ranges

Control with Intent

Meisterhau:

Liechtenauer distinguished five principal cuts, the Meisterhau (“master cuts”), the cornerstone of the German schools: Zornhau, Krumphau, Zwerchhau, The Meisterhau are intended as counter–strikes to simultaneously deflect the oncoming blow while hitting.

Kron / Krone: (“Crown”) The German Kron is not a stance, but actually a strike of Liechtenauer described by Sigmund Ringeck (c. 1440). This action is essentially that of lifting the blade to stifle and bind an oncoming blow with the ricasso and guard prior to counter-cutting. Also type of Halb Schwert (half-sword) parry against a vertical downwards cut with the sword held point forward over the head, used against a vertical downwards cut to the head. Holding the sword over the head with the point forward, catching the incoming cut on the portion of the blade between the hands. Can be followed by a thrust over the opponent’s right arm at his face as a single-time or double-time technique. In this posture the sword is “crowning “ and protective over the head. Leckuechner’s definition of the Kron from c. 1482 is similar: “Step and strike from above with your true edge to his left ear. The other step and strike from above with your short edge to his right ear.” See also Corona or Posta di Fronte.

Zornhau (“rage cut” or “strike of wrath”), diagonal high or low cut by the long edge, often from behind the right shoulder –essentially just a downward blow to ward while hitting

Krumphau (“twisted” or “crooked cut”), made downwards with the short/false edge, and effected with crossed or twisted wrists, may also be delivered with a slicing or pulling action by the back edge of the blade while close–in and blades are crossed –essentially just a reversing of the weapon to cut with the back edge

Zwerchhau (horizontal side cut) –essentially just a side blow that also knocks aside their attack

Schielhau (“squinting cut”), made downwards with the false edge at the enemy’s shoulder or neck, may be delivered by bringing the blade back around behind the head to strike with the false edge and passing with the leg –essentially just a high side-ways blow made by whipping or torquing the blade around while stepping out

Scheittelhau (the “crown/scalp cut” or “parting strike”), made vertically downwards with the long/true edge and literally aimed at the crown of the head –essentially just a downward blow made so that knocks aside the opponent’s cut

Einlaufen

(“Running In”) To duck under the opposing weapon or employ closing and entering techniques (Einlauff).

Thrusting / Counter-thrusting

Gripping

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7u_T-0iDbA

Identify & demonstrate comprehension of:

DGZPS – Duerer’s acronym for “It works on both sides”, signifying the inherent symmetry of techniques on the right or left

Durchwechselln – “changing through” or voiding and entering to counter–attack (as opposed to)

Schwert Wechslen - (“Shifting the sword” or “sword change”) In Talhoffer, reversing the grip and grabbing the blade in Halb-Schwert.

Weckemeister - From the Pflug stance, to displace an attack then deliver an upward thrust to the face from below.

Schwuch - A lever-grip on the arm, with momentum that forces the opponent to fall. To “Schwuchten”, is to “teeter-totter”.

Dal Wegbinden - (“The sling-away” or the “sling-behind”) In Talhoffer, the act of pulling the sword blade away from contact or opposition and turning or withdrawing the body to use the second hand to seize or strike.

Hande Drucken - (“pressing the hands” or “to press the hand”). A term of Liechtenauer likely meaning stop cuts to the opponent’s hands or forearms. The term refers to the pressure of the hands exerted by means of the sword-blade against the arms of the opponent.

Pfoberr Zigel - A circular-motion with the Ort in front of the opponent’s eyes, until a favorable Blossen (opening) is discovered; corresponds approximately to the Redel. With the Pfoberr Zigel (foper zagle), the fencer executes a sword-movement that resembles a pummeling wheel from the tail of a peacock.

Veller - To fake a cut or thrust from an upper Blossen (opening) to a lower one, i.e., the concept of feinting high to low.

Noterczunge - A fast repeated series of thrusts over the Gehiltz of the opposing sword, by which a Durchwechselln (change through) is initiated again and again, but is not executed, until the opponent is overwhelmed and leaves a Blossen (opening) for a thrust. The sword in its movement is like the “hissing tongue of an adder”.

Krawthacke - (“garden hoe”) A swift sequence of change-blows to the upper and lower Blossen (opening) in a vertical direction, during which each upward blow you step towards the opponent. The term comes from the actions visual resemblance to the motion of a garden hoe.

Redel - To hold the sword with outstretched arms and execute a swift circular-motion of the blade in front as a falsing. The name comes from similarity to the rotation of a wheel.

Sturtzhaw - ("plunging cut", "plunge blow", or "shifting cut") According to Talhoffer, a straight thrust from the Hengen.

Durchstreichen - ("Striking Through") A sweeping or flourishing the sword in front of the opponent, to stall, confuse, intimidate, or provoke. Related to the Rauschen ("the rustles"), a quick series of strikes

Bleiben - ("Remaining") In a binding position to maintain the blades pressing in contact and thereby sense the opponent's intentions through feeling the pressure on his blade (i.e., Fühlen).

Alter Schnitt - ("After Slice" or "The Ancient Slice") A cut over the arm of the opponent when he has repulsed a Nachreisen. To move in to slice on the opponent's extended arms as a Nach action following the completion of his strike. Part of the "secrets" of fencing—in contrast to the fundamentals of the art.

Schlaudern - ("Slinging") An overhand slinging blow akin to Das Gayszlen.

Duplieren / Doplieren - ("Doubling") To instantly follow up a parried true-edge strike with a false edge strike around the opponent's blade.

Abzug - ("Withdrawal") According to Meyer, a stage of engagement where the combatant tries to disengage without being hit, usually delivering a retreating strike to cover the withdrawal

Wechselhaw / Wechsler - ("Change Blow" or "Changer") An attack that evades a parry by suddenly changing to another target.

Hart und Weich - ("hard and soft") The idea when ever contact is made of gauging the pressure the opponent places upon your blade (either strong or weak), oppose strength with weakness and weakness with strength to control and exploit.

Schlachender Ort - Another form of Mortsclag but one that grasps the blade in both hands in order to make a thrust.

Glietzhaw - ("Clashing Blow") According to Meyer a forehand blow in which the right hand comes in with knuckles upward to catch an opponent's blow on the flat, then rolls counterclockwise to deliver a false edge blow.

Ablauffen - ("Running Off") Withdrawing the blade from an attack, before or after contact, by rotating it around the hilt to hit with the false edge on the other side. Can be done singularly or doubly. One of the primary ways of using a Kurze Schneide attack.

Masters Biography Notes

Familiarize yourself with the names, dates, and basic content.

Tower Fechtbuch I.33 (Royal Armouries MS I.33) – Anonymous 13th century German “Sword and Buckler” manuscript, on the use of the Medieval sword and buckler – the earliest known surviving work.

Johannes Liechtenauer – Influential German fechtbuch of 1389 on swordsmanship and other weapons (only portions survive through the commentaries of later masters). Compiled by the priest Hango Doebinger. The most important source for the German school. Liechtenauer’s work is also known to us through Hans Lebkammer’s Fechtbuch. Presented with commentary in the early 1400s by other master such as Peter von Danzig and then Sigmund Ringeck.

Fiore dei Liberi (Italy) – 1410, Flos Duellatorum in Armis (“Flower of Battle”). Leading master of the Bolognese school of fighting, primary source today for Italian long-sword. Studied under German masters and his method strongly reflects their style. Text also includes dagger fighting & wrestling. At least three different versions exist.

Das Solothurner Fechtbuch – c. 1423 (“The Solothurn Fightbook”). Swiss-German. Similar to Talhoffer, although its date precedes him. Features mainly armored fighting, long-sword, dagger, unarmed.

Sigmund Ringeck – Fechtbuch of c. 1440. A major source consisting of commentaries on Liechtenauer’s method. A fascinating view of the pragmatic art of Medieval German swordsmanship.

Manuscript 3542 - An obscure short 15th century English text on the use of two-handed great-swords. Provides terms similar to German texts.

Additional Manuscript 39564 – A rare 15th century English velum scroll on swordplay (possibly great-sword). Cryptic, but sheds some light on similar works.

Anonymous German Fechtbuch manuscript “Gladiatorie”, – mid-1400s. A significant work covering armored combat.

Anonymous German manuscript – “Goliath”, late-1400s/early-1500s. A significant work covering unarmored great-sword combat and wrestling.

Hans Talhoffer – Various editions of Fechtbuecher of 1443, 1449, and 1467. Covers long-sword & other weapons, includes some material of Liechtenauer and Austrian wrestling of Ott the Jew.

Codex Wallerstein – “Vonn Baumann's Fechtbuch”, c. 1470. Collection of anonymous German text and illustrations and possibly earlier.

Philippo Vadi – c. 1482–87 (Italy) De Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi (“About the Gladiatorial Art of Fighting”). A master from the town of Pisa who served noblemen and was master at Urbino. Based on the method of Fiore. The second of the two major Italian sources.

Pietro Monte – (Spaniard in Italy). Monte was a master of the well-established Bolognese school tradition and wrote extensively in the 1480s and 1490s on wrestling, swordsmanship, mounted combat, physical fitness, dueling, military theory, and the use of shields and other weapons.

Albrecht Dürer’s Fechtbuch – 1512. Superb artwork on sword use and wrestling by the famed early Renaissance German artist.

Jörg Wilhalm – Fechtbuch of 1523. Based on Liechtenauer this work contains the largest range of long-sword & great sword techniques of any manual, both armored and unarmored.

Hans Lebkammer – Fechtbuch edition of c. 1530, in the Liechtenauer tradition on long-sword, sword, grappling, & other weapons.

Achille Marozzo – Bolognese master often credited with the development of civilian swordplay and Renaissance foyning fence yet his work contains the standard weapons and methods of earlier centuries—just in some cases adapted to a lighter, thinner tapering short sword. Emphasis was on single short sword alone or with buckler.

Paulus Hector Mair (Germany) c. 1540. – an official from the city of Augsburg who compiled and edited at least three older Fechtbücher on a great variety of swords and weapon use. Was obsessed with collecting arms & armor and fencing texts. His compilation is quite significant in the range of techniques, weapons, and information it provides.

Joachim Meyer (German) – 1570, Kunst der Fechtens. A major Renaissance work on weapons, the staff and wrestling including long-swords.