

***Research methods and tools for
understanding combat manuals***

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Meyer Convivium

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11 questions we need to answer to understand fencing treatises

1. Who is the author and what is his background?
2. How are the teachings connected to earlier works?
3. Why is he teaching this and how will the knowledge be used?
4. Who is he teaching to and for what purpose?
5. What are the contexts, i.e. the situations and the environments in which it is applied?
6. What are the social limitations for the topic, e.g. laws and customs?
7. What are the purpose, tactical motivations and goals of the action?
8. How are the actual 'sharp' weapons commonly designed and how do they behave?
9. What are the effects on various garments and body parts of the weapon and technique in question?
10. How does the human body work and respond to the type of trauma that can be inflicted with the weapon and technique in question?
11. How do these effects vary when one uses different levels of force and different parts of the weapon?

See full article at <http://hroarr.com/the-nature-of-the-work-ahead-of-us>

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Deeper investigation

Context

Environment & Situation
Offense or Defense?
Goal
Grip

Principles & Deeper understanding

Grip - Context
Take initiative
Timing & Nachreissen
Continuation & Pressure
Shit happens
Go with the flow
Deflect and make weak
Feinting & Baiting

Techniques as embodiment of principles

Structure & Categorization
Principle
Goal
Flow

Analysis of Joachim Meyer's dagger teachings

Method

- Read the full material on the weapon several times.
- Read the full material of the author more than once.
- Analyze the images carefully, not least the ones that aren't mentioned in text. Note in particular stances, grips and how shadows and light fall on the combatants, their weapons and the ground. If the images are deemed reliable, compare the different lengths of weapons to judge their relative angles and note also the angles of the blades. Note also the relative angles and distances between the combatants and their weapons, but keep in mind that the image might illustrate the end of a complicated action, but they may also reflect several actions in time in a single image or sometimes only part of the image shows the specific action and occasionally not perfectly so, even according to the author.
- Build an image of the body and weapon mechanics of the system with a focus on movement.
- Build an image of the range of techniques.
- Create categories under which all exemplified techniques can be sorted, e.g. principle, distance, target, where the bind is etc.
- Study the weapons and clothes worn and analyze how they affect the fighting.
- Pay close attention to what the possible multiple interpretations are for each example.
- Pay close attention to how the opponent acts and responds, particularly when the descriptions are vague.
- Compare to reports of actual contemporary and modern real-life incidents.
- Get weapons that are similar to those used in the source of study. Also make sure to handle sharp versions for deeper understanding.
- Test the interpretations in aggressive and uncooperative "random" settings.
- Test the interpretations in sparring.
- Document with video for analysis, in order to gain a better appreciation for your own movements and mechanics.
- Reread the text and analyze possible issues while taking into account influence from the friendly training context and possible side effects from protective gear and non-sharp weapons.
- Test again, reread and test again in an iterative process.
- Continue forwards in the material with new techniques.
- After some time return to the material with "fresh eyes" and reconsider your interpretations.

Characteristics

Holistic system tied to the teachings of all weapons he teaches.
Retaking & maintaining control, retreating and withdrawing safely.
Sometimes attacks first.
Multiple attacks.
Shit happens, so what to do?
Low and wide stances.
Opposing stances with e.g. left foot leading and right hand forward.
Increased frequency of stabbing through use of opposing guards.

Parameters

Killing, maiming, submission or for play?
Attack or defense?
Street or duel?
Armed or unarmed?
Reitzen-Nehmen-Treffen-Abzug.
Adaptive structure to connected techniques.
Inside & Outside.
Distance to opponent's weapon.
Time given to respond.
Leading foot and hand.
Control of dagger arm.

Purpose

To get out alive; parry, threaten and escape.
To capture and control.
To injure.
To kill.

Stances

Oberhut
Mittelhut
Kreuzhut
Unterhut

Grips

Overhand, Reversed (Ice-pick)
Underhand, Forward (Hammer)
Middle-grip

Tools

Attacks

Stabbing with the dagger.
Striking with the back end of dagger.
Slashing with dagger.

Parries

Blocking and Grips with unarmed hand.
Blocking with wrist of dagger hand.
Parryings with dagger.

Locks

Lockings with dagger.
Lockings of arms.

Throws (Forwards, backwards, twisting around or twist opponent around)

Wrenching.
Breaking of elbow.
Tripping over leg.
Hooking with legs.
Lifting of leg.
Grabbing clothes.

Disarming

Strikes
Twisting

Counters

Feints

Dürchwechseln

Pressure points

Wrist
Elbow
Biceps
Throat, Neck & Collar
Hair & Beard
Torso
Thighs & Calves

<p>Leverage areas on your own body</p> <p>Palm of the hand Forearm (outside) Elbow (inside) Armpit Shoulder Hip Thigh Knee (both back and front sides)</p>	<p>Primary targets</p> <p>Arm Hand & Wrist (Sinews) Elbow Armpit Neck & Throat Face Chest Ribs</p> <p>Secondary targets</p> <p>Neck & Throat Biceps Elbow Rear arm Legs Feet</p>
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Examples of dagger from Joachim Meyer's 1570 treatise, focusing on *control* (transl. by Dr. Jeffrey Forgeng)

Concerning the High Guard [Oberhut]

Approach him thus and keep your right foot forward. If your opponent thrusts at your left, then go with hanging dagger from your right against his dagger, and catch his hand with your dagger behind his hand at the wrist, so that in parrying him your pommel is up and your blade down. Now as soon as you hit his wrist with this parrying, at once go through under his arm with your dagger (yet such that in all this you keep your blade close to his arm), and over back around his hand; press your blade well against his arm to pinch him that much harder. Force his hand down toward your right side...

If he thrusts from above at your left as before, then thrust across against his incoming arm, so that your dagger goes out over his arm; thus catch his arm on your wrist in the crook between your hand and dagger; with this thrust, turn your right side well around against his left, so that you can catch his hand that much harder between your wrist and dagger. Enclose his hand hard, and jerk it down away from you toward your right, so that you wrest his arm.

Thus you have two parryings from your right against his left, namely:

With the first you catch his wrist on your hanging dagger, strongly away from you toward your left.

The second parrying is to catch his hand on your wrist under your dagger with a counterthrust, just as he is thrusting in.

As you now have executed this from your right, so you shall also perform it from your left against his right, if he thrusts outside at your right.

Low Guard [Underhut] with its Parrying

If your opponent thrusts in at you, then step out sideways toward his right, and thrust at him outside over his right arm; force it downward to you. Send your pommel back up at his chin as I have already taught; thrust quickly back through, slashing from above at his face.

Item, if he thrusts from above, then go up with your dagger horizontal, and catch his hand behind his dagger by his wrist, and turn around him with your dagger from inside over his arm. Force it toward your left side; then quickly thrust through in front at his face.

Middle Guard [Mittelhut]

This guard is when you hold your dagger to the side at the level of your belt, or else straight before you. But since you will parry from these just as from the others...

What the Chief Parryings Are

With the dagger you have two parryings, the one executed with the dagger, concerning which I have already spoken, the second executed with the left hand

Item, approach him thus with the High Guard, and hold your left hand before your chest; if your opponent thrusts at you from above, then catch his hand with your reversed hand, twist it away from you, and jab at him with the pommel below on his elbow-joint...

Note in the Onset, if an opponent goes at you with a High Thrust, then go under his hand while it is still up in the air; thus hold his hand up with your left. Quickly grip through with your right hand and dagger under his right arm; come to help the left one with it, as you can see in the large figures in the same Image B; at the same time as you grip through, step with your right leg well behind his right thigh, and meanwhile slip your head through under his right arm. Cast him thus on his back, or break his arm.

Item, in the Onset come into the Low Guard, and lay the dagger on your right arm; and note when he thrusts in from above, and go under his right arm with a spring forward under his dagger, and catch it on your horizontal dagger, near his wrist; at once seize him by the elbow with your left hand. Jerk it to you ... and thrust at him wherever you will.

Cross Guard [Kreutzhut]

If an opponent thrusts in from above, then spring under his thrust, and at the same time go up with both arms, and catch his arm behind his dagger between your hands on the blade of your dagger; and as his hand falls on yours, seize it with reversed left hand. Twist it rapidly and forcefully away from you...

If an opponent thrusts at you from below, then fall on his arm with your dagger horizontal, and grasp it also with your left hand...

Note when an opponent overruns you with a High Thrust, and parry him with your horizontal dagger lying along on your arm; and in this parrying you shall have your left hand crosswise on your right; and when he has thus thrust in, grasp his dagger from below with left reversed hand. Break it out of his grasp up toward his right shoulder; as you break it out, catch with your right hand well outside over his right arm, so that if he will not let go of his dagger, you can at once step with your right foot behind his right, and east him away from you on his back.

If an opponent thrusts outside against your right at your head, then thrust at him outside over his right arm; pinch it between your wrist and dagger, and force it to the right side of your chest. Fall with your left hand on his elbow joint, and break his arm, as can be seen in Image C in the small figures on the upper right.

Casting

Item, if an opponent thrusts at you above, then thrust at him outside over his right arm as before. Jerk it toward you; step with your left behind his right, and grip with your left hand around behind onto his left shoulder and jerk him to your left side over your forward leg,

How You Shall Take an Opponent's Dagger

Item, if an opponent pulls a dagger on you, then grip his hand, not with reversed but with straight grip; now if he has thrust from above, and you have gripped his hand as I have said, then twist it in an arc down toward your right, and grip his blade with your right reversed hand; thus break it out of his hand.

Now if he thrusts from below or straight in at your face, then grip his hand again as before, so that in gripping your little finger always stands toward his arm, your thumb toward his hand, and as before grip his dagger with right reversed hand, and break it out of his grasp,

Item, if an opponent thrusts at you from above, then grip his right hand with your left reversed hand; twist it up away from you, and spring with your right behind his right, and send your palm and pommel straight in at his throat; cast him away from you over your right leg.

Item, stand with your left foot forward, and grasp your dagger in the middle by your right side, so that the pommel stands out over your hand. If he thrusts in at you, then parry the jab from your face with your left reversed hand; meanwhile step well to him with your right foot, so that you turn your right side well toward him under your arm; and meanwhile jab with the pommel from above outside over his right arm at his face. And note as soon as he will parry the jab, and send the point up from below inside strongly through between his arms at his chin. Afterwards thrust back from above through his face with a back-step; guard against his right hand with your left hand.

Item, when you have caught his hand with your left hand, as I have taught, then approach him again with your right foot, and go through with your dagger under his and your arm, and wrench with your pommel outside over his right arm strongly down toward your right, so that in this wrenching downward you release his right hand with your left. Then quickly thrust straight in through his face with a back-step on your left foot.

In the Onset, position yourself with your right foot forward, and grasp your dagger so that your blade extends from the little finger side of your hand, and thrust from your right from above through his face [ATTACK FIRST]. As you thrust through, turn your dagger quickly by your right (?read: left] side back upward for a Low Thrust, and thrust the second powerfully up through at his arm, so that at the end of the thrust you come onto your right shoulder. From there, thrust at once strongly across at his face, also through. Thrust the fourth strongly from above back through his face; and go quickly with horizontal dagger up against his right arm to parry.