

Meyer's German Longsword 1



Name: _____

Meyer's German Longsword

Level 1, 9th Revision

This workbook looks at some of the primary guards used in German longsword traditions as well as the normal attacks you can make from the guards. The focus of this workbook is Meyer, but quotes from other masters will be included from time to time.

Thrusting

During Meyer's time, thrusting was considered vulgar and was only used when warring with foreign nations. To use a thrust against another civilian was considered a grievous offense that could lead to banishment or execution, even when acting in self-defense.

To these social issues we add the difficulty of teaching the thrust in a school setting prior to the invention of fencing masks. So it isn't surprising that Meyer largely omits using the thrust in his longsword manual. He will cover it in depth in a later books on the Dussack and Rapier, with the expectation that the advanced student will apply those techniques to the longsword.

Since purists may wish to adhere closely to Meyer's pedagogy, we have moved topics on thrusting to a supplemental workbook.

Copyright

The primary source for this workbook is Jeffrey L. Forgeng's The Art of Combat. This is a translation of Meyer's Fundamental Description of the Noble and Knightly Art of Fencing, 1570. In order to abide by US fair use laws, we have limited ourselves to quoting only brief passages. Reading assignments will be from this text.

Selected quotes by Sigmund Schining ein Ringeck have also been included. These were translated by Keith Farrell and are offered on Wiktenauer for "non-profit, educational, or academic use".

Additional works cited can be found in the Bibliography.

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Chapter 1 – Langort (Longpoint)

This chapter looks at basic concepts such as the parts of the sword and how to perform basic attacks. It includes a mixture of physical and written exercises, as well as quotes from the historic manuals.

Parts of the Schwert/Sword

- Knopf: Pommel
- Ort: Point
- Creutz: Quillons / Gefäß: Hilt
- Heft: Haft / Bint: Grip
- Schilt: Shield
- Klinge: Blade
- Stercke: Strong
- Schweche: Weak
- Lange Schneide: Long Edge
- Kurtze Schneide: Short Edge

Draw a sword here and label its parts.

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 2.

Carrying

As the longsword is too large to be worn at the waist by a scabbard or sheath, it is customarily carried by shoulder. You can see an example of this in this illustration by Francesco Alfieri.

The Salute

As a sign of respect, it is customary to salute at the beginning class and before any pair exercise or sparring. We shall be using Hutton's version of the salute for the two-handed sword. It begins from the carrying position shown on the right.

Alfred Hutton

1. Pass the right hand across the body and seize the grip close to the quillons.
2. Bring the sword perpendicularly in front of the body with the quillons in line with the mouth.
3. Carry the sword over to the right side, and lower the point to the front about four inches from the ground, and draw back the right foot about six inches.
4. Raise the sword to a perpendicular position at the right side.
5. Carry the sword over to the left side, and resume the marching position.



Langort (Longpoint)

Langort is the most important guard because nearly all attacks travel through, or end in, this posture. Below are some descriptions and illustrations of the posture from various German manuals.

Joachim Meyer

Stand with your left foot forward, and hold your weapon with your arms extended long in front of your face so that your point stands toward your opponent's face; thus you lie in the guard of the Longpoint, as shown by the figure in Image A.

Sigmund Schining ein Ringeck

Before you come too close to him in Zufechten, set your left foot forwards and hold the point towards him with outstretched arms towards the face or the chest. If he cuts at you from above and down towards your head, wind with the sword against his cut and stab him in the face.

Joachim Meyer

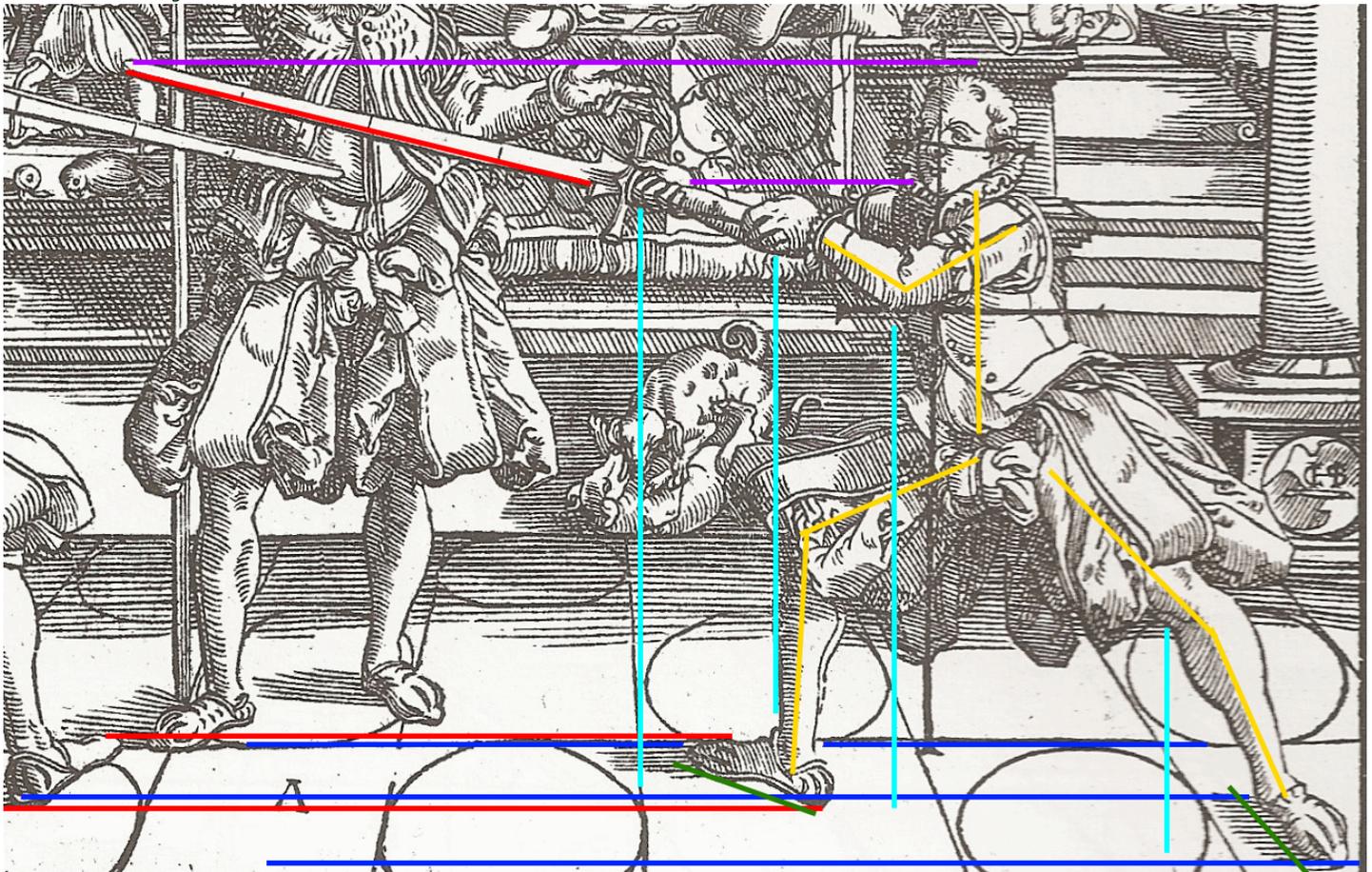
Here is the Langort position shown on the other side, with the right foot forward.



Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 11 and Part 3.

Guard Analysis



- Right foot is turned out.
- Right knee is bent so that the lower leg is vertical.
- Left foot is 90 degrees.
- Left knee is slightly bent.
- Body is upright.
- Chin is level.
- Right hand is close to the guard with the thumb up on a quillon.
- Left hand is on the pommel.
- Left arm is bent.
- Hilt is shoulder high, point just higher than the head.
- Pommel is over the knee

Exercise 1 Stance

Stand at attention. Turn the left foot 90 degrees outward. Then step forward with the right foot into Langort as shown in the illustration.

Carefully review the guard analysis page, paying close attention to the relative location of the feet and knees. Adjust your legs to match, and then correct your posture and finally the arms. We look at the stance in this order, from the ground up, because mistakes in feet and legs upset the rest of the body.

Repeat with the left foot forward.



Discussion

1. Why is the front foot turned outward? How does it affect your balance and ability to take another step if it is pointed forward or inward?
2. The body is upright in this stance. What would be the benefit or drawback of leaning forward in this stance?
3. What other things can you do to make yourself more or less stable when standing in Langort?

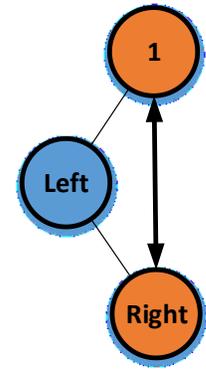
Passing Step

The passing step allows one to change lead foot. The length of the step will depend on whether you wish to widen or narrow your stance.

Sigmund Schining ein Ringeck

This is the longsword's first lesson; that you shall learn to cut properly from both sides, so that you can fight strongly and correctly. When you want to cut from the right side, stand with your left foot forwards; and when you want to cut from the left side, stand with your right foot forwards. If you cut with an Oberhau from the right side, follow after the cut with your right foot. If you do not do this then the cut is poor and insincere, because your right side lingers behind. Then the cut becomes too short and cannot follow the correct arc down towards the other side, in front of the left foot.

Similarly the cut is incorrect if you strike from the left side and do not follow after the cut with the left foot. So mark well, from which side you strike, that the foot follows after the cut. In this manner you can perform all of your techniques correctly and with strength. And in the same way should all the other cuts be performed.



Discussion

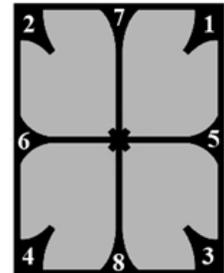
4. Unlike modern fencing which keeps the front foot forward, German longsword tends to focus on passing steps. Why do you think this is the case?

The Primary Cuts

There are various ways to refer to the primary cutting lines. In order to be consistent across all of the workbooks, we have chosen to use the Victorian numbering scheme, which you can see illustrated on the right.

The four basic cuts in Meyer's manual are:

- Oberhau – High cut (Line 7)
- Zornhau – Wrath cut (Lines 1 and 2)
- Mittlehau – Middle or Horizontal Cut (Lines 5, and 6)
- Underhau – Low Cut (Lines 3 and 4)

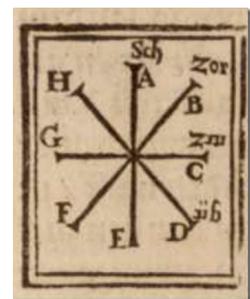


The basic cuts may be performed with either the long or short edge. As a general rule, step with the right foot for cuts from the right (Lines 1, 3, and 5) and the left foot for cuts from the left (Lines 2, 4, and 6). For vertical cuts step with either foot.

Note: In older German manuals, any cut from above is an Oberhau.

Meyer occasionally uses a lettering system, which you can see in the second chart on the right. The abbreviations on the chart refer to the cutting lines he refers to in some devices.

- Sch: Scheittellini – Parting Line
- Zor: Zornlini – Wrath Line
- Zw: Zwerchlini – Thwart Line
- Üb: Übersich steyget lini



Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 4. Introduction thru "Low Cut".

Four Openings

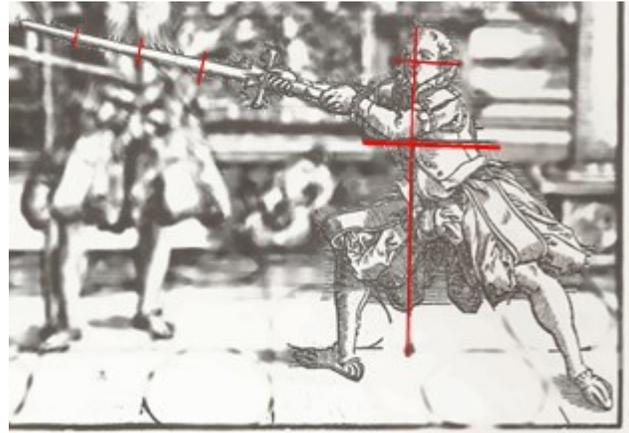
The body is divided into four openings: upper-left, upper-right, lower-left, and lower-right. Likewise, the head is divided into four openings. This is shown in the diagram for Langort. The purpose of a guard is to protect one or more openings.

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 1.

Exercise 2 Targets and their Effect on Range

Note that the hips and legs are ignored in this diagram. To see why, you'll need a partner or pell.



Begin by throwing a strike at shoulder height, adjusting your range so that your tip just barely grazes your target. Without moving your feet, aim for locations higher and lower on the body, observing how the change in target affects your range.

Discussion

5. When you stand in Langort, why types of attacks do you feel safe from?
6. Which types of attacks do you feel most vulnerable to?

Sign Man

It is traditional for fencing schools to have a sign man posted on the wall. This is used to act as a visual reminder of the cuts and what lines they occur on. Using the space below, label the cuts and openings.



Exercise 3 Stepping with Cuts Part I

Start in a relaxed stance with the right foot back and the sword near the right shoulder. From this stance, throw cut 1 into Langort while stepping forward with the right foot. Recover back to the starting stance. Repeat with cuts 2 thru 7.

Switch to a right-foot forward stance. Again, throw cuts 1 thru 7, this time stepping with the left foot.

In the space below, record whether you prefer stepping with the right or left foot with each of the seven cuts.

2	7	1
6		5
4	8	3

Exercise 4 Grip

As the blow lands, the grip on the sword should be loose. Think of it like a hammer; if you hold the hammer firmly you shorten your blow and weaken its power. If instead you hold it loosely and allow it to snap, then you can utilize the full power and reach your body provided.

To test reach, experiment near a wall or other stationary object. For power, use a pell. In the space below, record whether you prefer stepping before, during, or after the blow lands.

Grip	Effect on Range	Effect on Power
Tight		
Loose		

Exercise 5 Stepping with Cuts Part II

Having established which foot to step with for each attack, now it is time to look at when the foot lands. For this exercise, using a pell is preferable. Throw a number 1 cut with a step, ending in Langort. In this experiment, you'll try completing the cut before, at the same time, and after your foot lands.

In the space below, record whether you prefer stepping before, during, or after the blow lands.

Foot Lands Before Sword	Same Time	Foot Lands After Sword

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 7. Also Part Three, "On Stepping".

Exercise 6 Cuts from Langort

This exercise can be done solo in or in circle. It begins with basic cuts and works up to the four-cut combinations known informally as Meyer's Cross.

High Combo

Step into Langort with the left foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 1 cut into Langort with the right foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 2 cut. Repeat several times.

Switch feet so that the right foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 2 cut into Langort with the left foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 1 cut. Repeat several times.

Low Combo

Step into Langort with the left foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 3 cut into Langort with the right foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 4 cut. Repeat several times.

Switch feet so that the right foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 4 cut into Langort with the left foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 3 cut. Repeat several times.

Cross Combos from the Right

Step into Langort with the left foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 1 cut into Langort with the right foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 4 cut. Repeat several times.

Step into Langort with the left foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 3 cut into Langort with the right foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 2 cut. Repeat several times.

Cross Combos from the Left

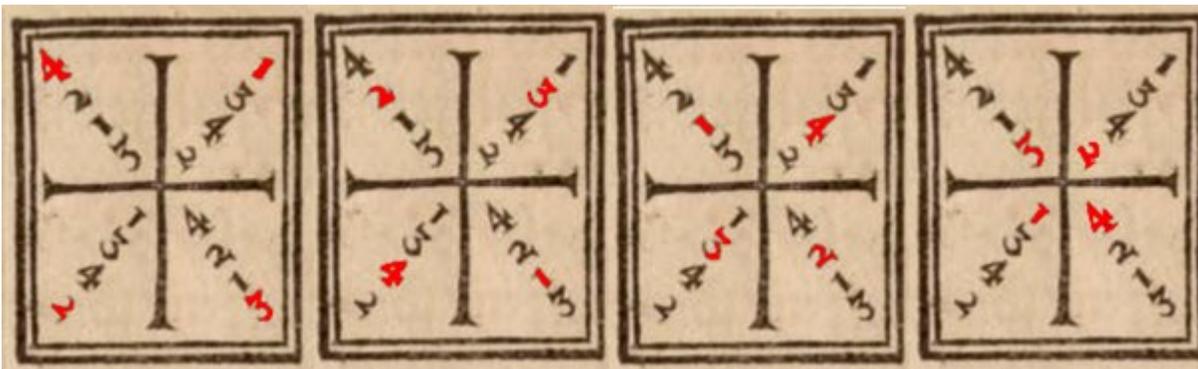
Switch feet so that the right foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 2 cut into Langort with the left foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 3 cut. Repeat several times.

Switch feet so that the right foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 4 cut into Langort with the left foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 1 cut. Repeat several times.

Exercise 7 Meyer's Cross

In order to become more familiar with the sword, Meyer offers us four cutting patterns with four cuts each. In the diagram below you can see the four patterns with each step in a given pattern highlighted in red.

These patterns are essentially just two cross combos from the same side. Since there are two sides and you can begin the pattern high or low, there are four basic patterns to practice.



If you prefer to use the Victorian numbering conventions, the patterns are:

1-4-3-2 3-2-1-4 2-3-4-1 4-1-2-3

Discussion

7. In Meyer's cross, why do you think he has you attack opposite corners?

Further Reading

Meyer's Cross is introduced in Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 10. We will cover that chapter in depth in the workbook titled Meyer's German Longsword 2.

Exercise 8 The Sword Dance Part I

Place a marker on the ground (e.g. a buckler or mask) between you and your partner. Stand such that your swords cross approximately one third of the distance from the tip to the hilt.

While stepping right, you and your partner throw a number 1 cut such that the blades clash. Then stepping left, throw a number 2 cut. Repeat with a number 3 and 4, stepping right and left respectively. This is known as the 1-2-3-4 pattern.

Once you can do this without error, extend the drill to include cuts 5 thru 8. Step right on odd numbers, left on evens. For cuts 5 thru 8 the blades will pass each other without touching.

This exercise shall serve as part of your warmup before each lesson.

Exercise 9 The Sword Dance Part II

Refer to Chapter 1 for the basics of the sword dance. Having done it a couple of times, we can alter our warmup to be a bit more complicated.

In this variant, you will be performing a number 1 cut with a step to the right between each normal cut. This is known as the 1-1-1-2 pattern. Continue it all the way to 1-8.

Once that pattern is well established, change to the 2-1-2-2 pattern. This is the same as above, except that there is a number 2 cut with a step to the left between each normal cut.

Chapter 2 – Ochs (Ox)

Ochs is also known as the “upper hanger” and is often used in the middle of a fight.

Sigmund Schining ein Ringeck

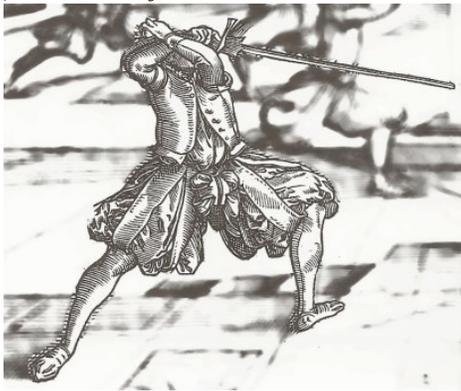
The first guard. The Ox.

Hold it like this: stand with the left foot forwards, and hold your sword beside and slightly in front of the right side of your head, and let the point hang towards his face.

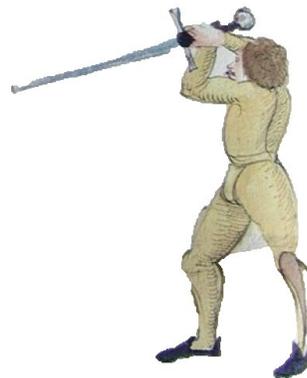
Joachim Meyer

The upper part of the combatant is allotted to the Ox, and as that has two quarters, the right and left, so one can divide the posture of the Ox into two parts, namely the right and left. The right Ox is done thus: stand with your left foot forward, and hold the sword with the hilt up by your head on the right side, so that your point extends toward your opponent’s face. For the left Ox, position yourself opposite to this, that is, stand with your right foot forward, and hold your sword with the hilt by your head on the left side as I have said. Thus you have both Ox guards or postures; this posture is depicted on the left side of Image B.

Joachim Meyer



Sigmund Schining ein Ringeck



Paulus Hector Mair

These illustrations from Paulus Hector Mair show both the left and right Ochs. Note how the left Ochs doesn't have the arms crossed.

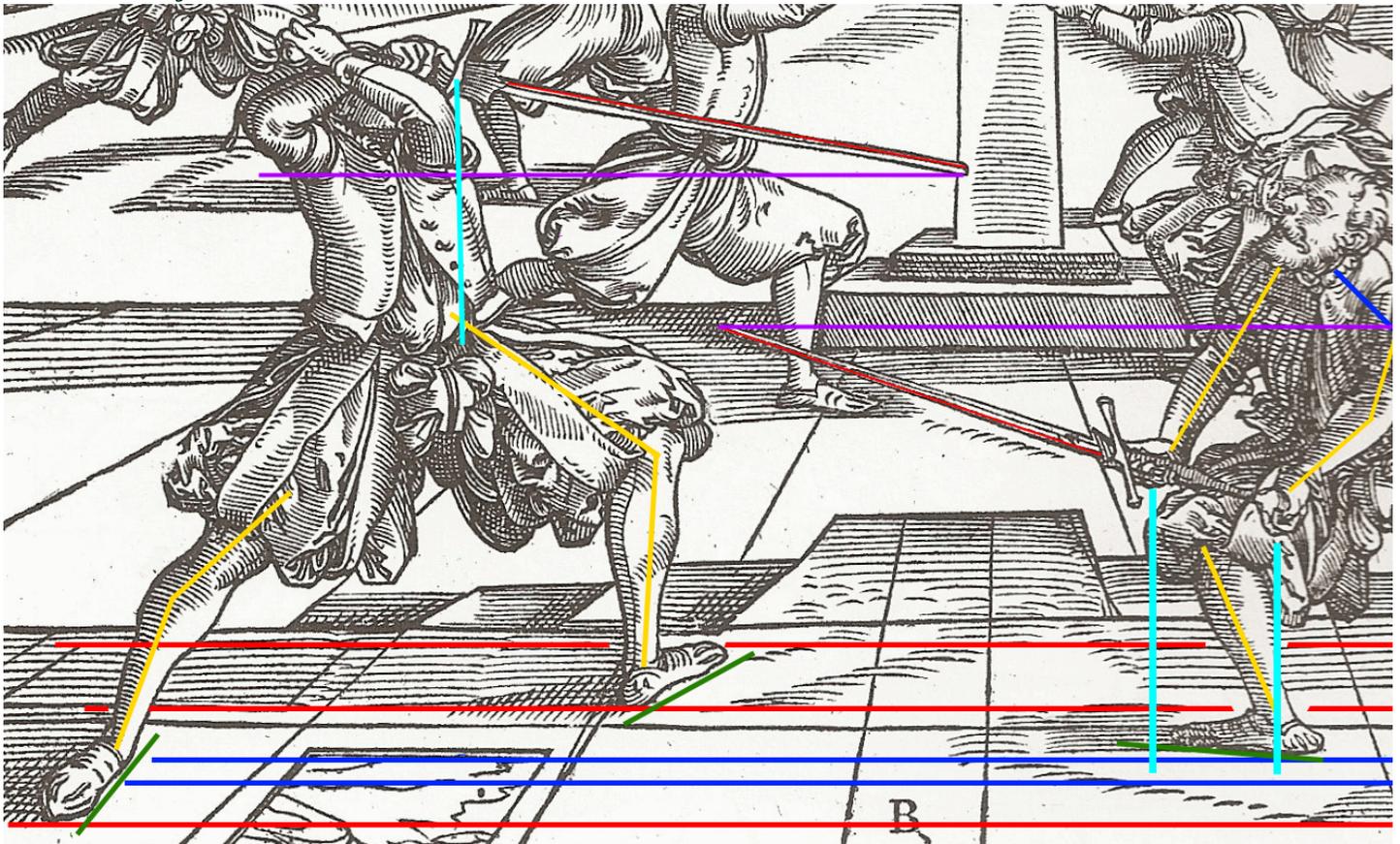


Terms such as “right Ochs” and “left Ochs” refer to which side of the body the sword is on. Generally speaking, this means a right guard has the right foot back. Likewise, a left guard has the left foot back.

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 11, “The Ox”.

Guard Analysis



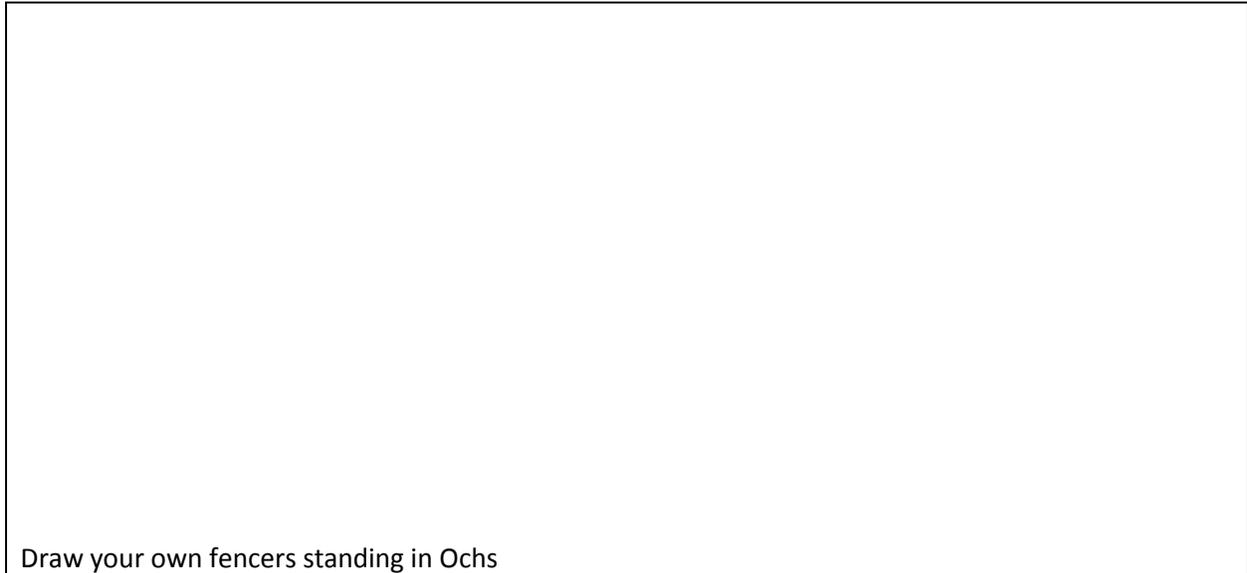
- Right foot is lined up with opponent's feet (blue lines) and at nearly 90 degrees.
- The ankle on the right foot is rolled slightly in to be in line with the leg rather than flat on the ground.
- Left foot is off to the side of the opponent with the foot turned outward.
- Distance between the feet is approximately one foot width.
- Both knees are bent
- The right hand is above the shoulder.
- The cross guard is above the hip.
- The right index finger is extended. The grip is done with the ring and pinky finger.
- The right thumb is in line with the edge and supporting the sword from beneath.
- The left ring and pinky fingers are loosely touching the pommel.
- The long edge (red) is up and slightly outwards.
- The point is level with the armpit.

Exercise 1 Stance

Stand at attention. Starting with the left foot, take three steps forward. On the third step, sink into Ochs with the left foot forward. This is informally called “walking into a guard” and should be used for this and all future guards.

Carefully review the guard analysis page, paying close attention to the relative location of the feet and knees. Adjust your legs to match, then correct your posture and finally the arms. We look at the stance in this order, from the ground up, because mistakes in feet and legs upset the rest of the body.

Repeat with the right foot forward.



Discussion

1. Does it feel more comfortable to have the quillons straight up and down or more of an angle?

Exercise 2 Grip Changes

When standing in Ochs, Meyer uses the thumb to support the blade from beneath. But when performing a number 1 cut, you are expected to end in Langort with the thumb alongside the upper quillon. This is known informally as a “dynamic grip” and is an important skill to master before attempting Meyer’s later techniques.

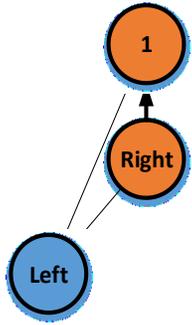
To practice this grip change, begin in right Ochs with the left foot forward. While passing forward with the right foot, throw a number 1 cut into Langort. After checking your grip, pass back with the right foot back into right Ochs. Again, check your grip. Repeat until the transition becomes natural.

Repeat this exercise from left Ochs (right foot forward) using a number 2 cut.

Other dynamic grip changes will be covered in later chapters.

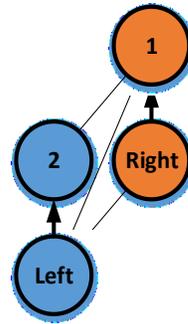
Increasing Step

An increase is simply the act of moving the front foot forward. This can be used to change ones stance or for a quick attack.



Advancing Step

The advancing step begins with moving the front foot forward. The length of the advance should be roughly one to two foot-lengths. A larger step than that risks unbalancing the fencer.



Exercise 3 Cuts from Ochs

Ochs doesn't allow one to easily execute cuts along all eight lines. This exercise is used to determine which cuts are effective from each side.

To perform this exercise, perform each cut from right Ochs using an increasing or passing step. This can be done in the air or against a pell. Pause at the completion of the cut and consider these factors in order.

- Balance at the completion of the cut
- Range
- Speed, including any predatory actions
- Power of the cut

Record you findings in the space below.

Cuts from Right Ochs

2	7	1
6		5
4	8	3

Cuts from Left Ochs

2	7	1
6		5
4	8	3

Discussion

2. If your opponent is in right Ochs, which attacks is he most likely to use?
3. If your opponent is in left Ochs, which attacks is he most likely to use?

The Purpose of Guards

It is important to note that guards are not merely postures that you assume, but rather positions from which to initiate and/or end an action. Cuts and parries should naturally pass through one or more guard positions such that if one decides to abandon a technique in favor of another mid-action, one can do so from an advantageous position.

Joachim Meyer

And so that you may always be mindful in this, the postures have arisen, which are essentially just a lingering or holding of the weapon in the furthest place, to which you have come in pulling up from the stroke, so that before the cut is fully completed you still have space in the middle of it to decide either to complete this cut according to your first intent, or that it will be more useful to turn it elsewhere; thus you will miss no opportunity that arises in the Before and After, rather (according to the admonition of the word Instantly) you can be shrewdly mindful of every opportunity. And the postures or guards arise from this, as I have said.

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 3. Focus on the introduction and conclusion, as the specific guards will be presented in due course.

Exercise 4 Cutting into Ochs

Starting in right Ochs, perform a number 3 cut. Rather than stopping in Langort, allow the blade to continue into left Ochs. Then perform a number 4 cut back into right Ochs. Repeat several times going both forward and backwards.

Measure

Measure is the concept of range or distance as it applies to individual fencers. An opponent is said to be “in your measure” if you can reach him with an attack. On the chart this would be wide, narrow, or close measure.

Measure	Distance
Beyond Measure	More than one step out of measure, tempo no longer applies
Outside Measure	One step out of measure
Wide Measure	Can hit with a step
Narrow Measure	Can hit by leaning forward
Close Measure	Can hit by extending arm
Inside Measure	Weapon’s point is past the opponent, making it ineffectual
Grappling	Can reach opponent with empty hand

Occasionally you’ll hear someone say your opponent is “inside your measure”. This means that he is so close that you can no longer use your weapon effectively. In addition to grappling, there are specialized techniques known as handwork to deal with this situation.

Exercise 5 Finding your Distance

Start by striking the pell with various parts of the sword. Like a baseball bat, a sword has a “sweet spot” where you can utilize the most power. This spot will vary from weapon to weapon, but a good starting point is roughly one quarter of the blade’s length from the tip. Once you discover your sword’s sweet spot, mark it with a piece of tape until you become accustomed to striking at that range.

The next step is to stand in Langort against a pell or partner as if you had just struck a blow. Make sure you are touching your target with the aforementioned mark. Without moving your rear foot, recover back into Ochs. This is your measure for a passing step. Any further away and your cut will be ineffectual or miss entirely.

Take several steps back, then approach in Ochs using advancing steps until you think that you are in measure. Test by cutting into Langort. Repeat until you can easily find your measure for both left and right Ochs.

For a more difficult challenge, approach until you are two steps away. Cut into Ochs on the other side, then cut against your target. In a real fight, you’ll often “cut into measure” so that you aren’t attacked as you close on your opponent.

Parrying

As in many other fencing traditions, German masters placed special emphasis on parries that simultaneously counter-attack.

Joachim Meyer

Be first aware that the parries are twofold, the first is without any particular advantage and is resorted to only for blocking parries from which you cannot do more with your weapon in that you oppose your opponent’s strike to avoid being damaged, but then seek not to damage him, but only to withdraw as you wish without being injured by him.

[...]

The second art of displacing is when you parry and injure your opponent with one strike, which the ancients undertook with special praise, from which these spoken words grew: “A proper fencer parries not. As his opponent strikes so he too strikes. As his opponent steps so he too steps. As his opponent stabs so he too stabs.”

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 5, “Some Useful Advice about Parrying”.

Exercise 6 Simple Attacks and Parries

A core exercise for this workbook is the simple attack and parry. To begin, two fencers face one another and one is designated the attacker or “agent”. The defender is referred to as the “patient”.

While the patient stands motionless, the agent takes a ranging shot to verify his measure is correct.

Then the agent throws a simple number 1 cut that that patient tries to parry. The patient may step in any manner he wishes and may counter-attack. However, the patient is considered to have failed the exercise if he is hit, even if he strikes the agent in the process.

Once the patient feels confident about parrying the number 1 attack, he will single the agent to move onto the next cuts. Perform this exercise for all 7 basic cuts with the patient in right Ochs before switching to left Ochs. (For this exercise, the agent may freely switch between left and right Ochs as feels comfortable.)

The way you parry will vary from guard to guard. For example, when using right Ochs you will usually parry cuts from above or to the left side with the point down with the hands held high. Cuts to the right usually require lowering the hand and raising the point. With left Ochs this would be reversed.

For most attacks, it is beneficial to step towards the sword while parrying. This allows you to interrupt the attack before its power has been fully generated. And if it does hit, it is more likely to be an ineffectual strike with the strong (lower half) of the sword.

For the purpose of this exercise, you may not use thrusts. Those will be covered in the optional material.

Parries while in Right Ochs

Note that the numbers refer to the agent’s perspective.

1	7	2
5		6
3	8	4

Parries while in Left Ochs

1	7	2
5		6
3	8	4

Discussion

4. In terms of attacking, do you prefer left or right Ochs? In terms of defense?
5. Do you feel your lower body is adequately protected in Ochs?
6. Did the parrying exercises change your opinion on when to step in relation to when your blade lands?

Anbinden (Binding)

A term you'll often encounter is Anbinden or Binding. Meyer tells us this is simply "when the swords connect with another". A bind occurs when the blades connect edge on edge and "bite" into each other. If the edge of a sword meets the flat of the other sword, the blades will tend to slide rather than bind.

Binding is more readily apparent when using sharp swords, blunted steel swords tend to slip an unrealistic amount even when edge on edge. Wood and synthetic swords tend to be especially slippery and the use of friction tape is recommended when attempting binding exercises.

Nachreisen (Following After)

Also translated as "chasing", the Nachreisen is an attack that is made in response to an opponent's attack or guard transition. The attack is made to where the sword just was. For example, if your opponent was in right Ochs uses a Zornhau (number 1 cut) into Langort or left Pflug, you respond by attacking his upper-right side.

Joachim Meyer

This is a particularly good handwork, and he who is very skillful in it and knows well how to use it may properly be praised as a master. And chasing is executed thus: if your opponent cuts with his weapon either too far up or down, or too far out to the side, then you rush after him at his opening and thus prevent his cut coming to completion; for this may properly be used against those who fight with their cuts sweeping wide around them.

An essential element of a Nachreisen is that it is a faster than the action it is interrupting.

Exercise 7 Nachreisen against Ochs

For this exercise, we'll be looking at a play directly from the manual.

Joachim Meyer

When an opponent is fighting with you, then observe in which part he holds his sword. Now if he holds it in the right Ochs, that is in the upper right quarter, then the moment he takes his sword away from there to change to the other side, or simply pulls up for the stroke, you shall cut in quickly and skillfully, using those cuts and techniques from which you can at once achieve a parry.

For this play, the agent will be in right Ochs while the patient waits with the sword at his right shoulder. The distance should be that the agent can strike with a single passing step.

As the agent begins Zornhauw (number 1 cut), the patient shall step forward and cut his arms using his own Zornhauw.

Chapter 3 – Pflug (Plow)

Pflug is also known as the lower hanger.

Sigmund Schining ein Ringeck

The second guard. The Plough.

Hold it like this: stand with the left foot forward, and hold your sword with crossed hands beside and slightly above your right knee, in such a way that the point is towards his face.

Joachim Meyer

The lower part of the combatant belongs to the Plow, and as that has two quarters or two sides, right and left, so the Plow is called right or left. Both are in essence merely the position of a thrust from below. Execute the right Plow as follows: stand with your right foot forward, hold your weapon with the hilt by your forward knee, and aim the tip or point at your opponent's face as if you intended to thrust at him from below; thus you are in the right Plow. If you stand with your left foot forward and do the same thing, then you are in the left Plow. And the right Plow is also illustrated in the same image [B] on the right.

Notice how Ringeck prefers his Pflug to be retracted while Meyer has it extended.

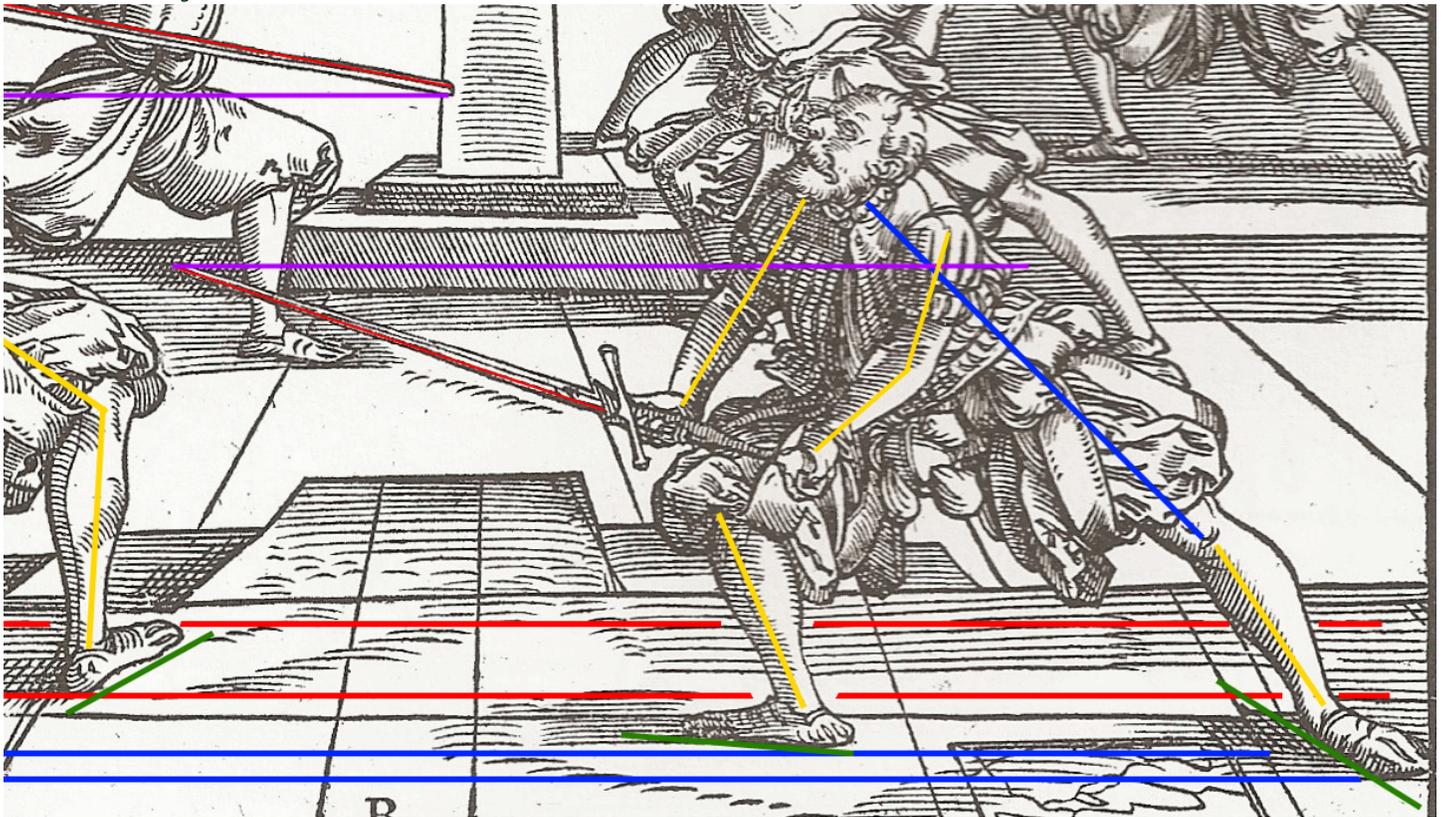


Here are two more examples, one from Solothurner and the other two from Paulus Hector Mair.

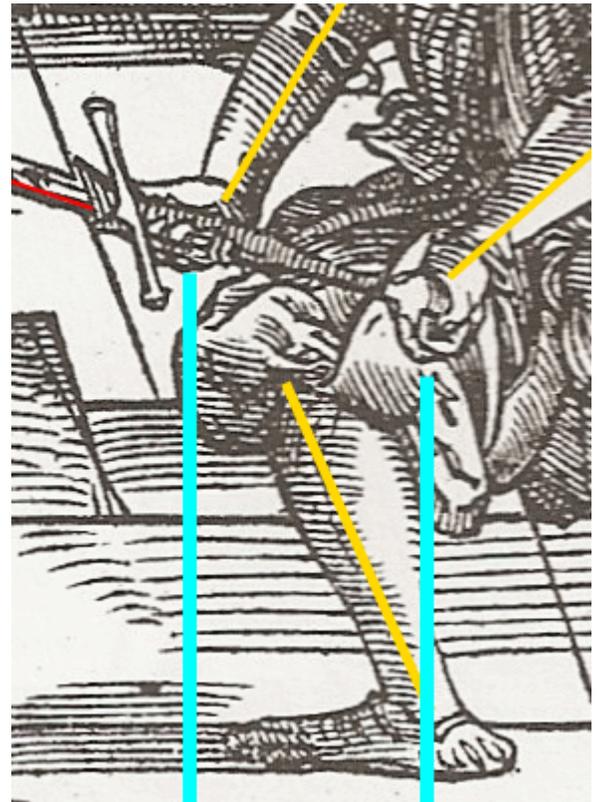


For now we'll focus on the extended Pflug. In a latter workbook, we'll examine the older, retracted form.

Guard Analysis

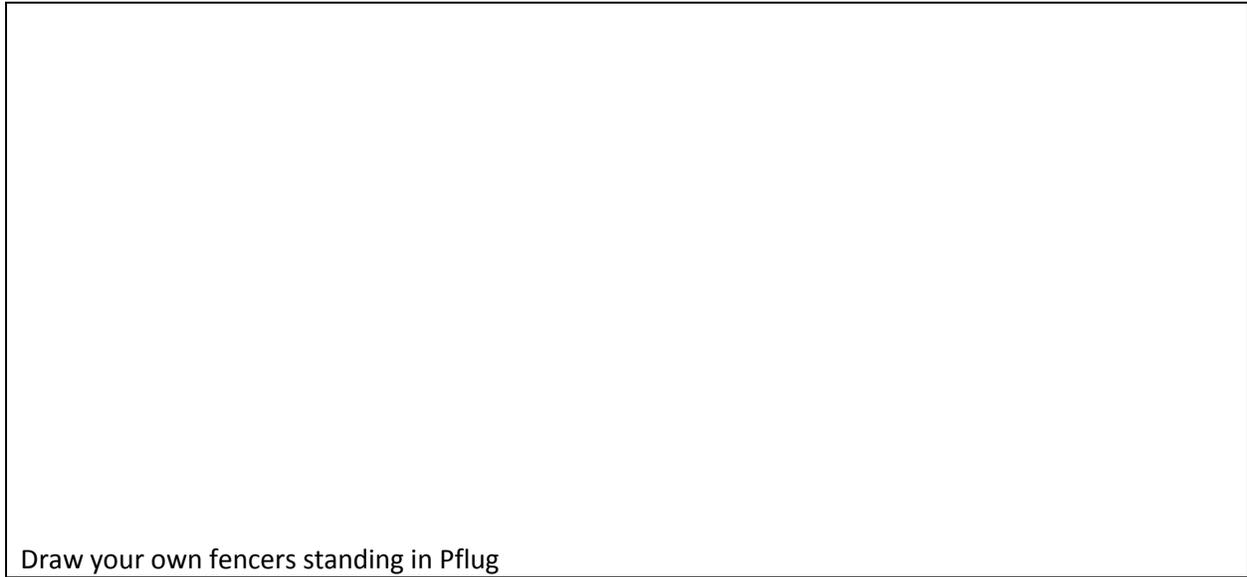


- The left foot is turned slightly out.
- The right foot is more than 90 degrees back.
- The heels are in line with each other.
- The back is in line with the rear leg.
- The head is inclined upward.
- The front knee is bent so that it is over the toe.
- The long edge (red) is turned inwards slightly.
- Both arms hang loosely, the left slightly bent.
- The right hand is over, or slightly past, the front knee.
- The right hand is cupping the handle.
- The thumb is along the short edge.
- The left hand is holding the pommel from behind.
- The point is level with the armpit.
- The point is level with the other fencer's hip.
- The crossguard is slightly angled with the short edge higher.



Exercise 1 Stance

After reviewing the guard analysis page, walk into the guard of Pflug and perform any necessary corrections to your stance.



Discussion

1. Unlike the previous two guards, Pflug is depicted with a forward lean. Does this make you feel more or less secure than the same guard, but with an upright stance?

Exercise 2 Grip Changes

Look closely at the grip used in this stance. Rather than wrapping the left hand around the handle or pommel, it is placed on the end of the pommel. Throw a few simple attacks using this grip and then repeat using a more traditional grip.

Discussion

2. What differences did you find between this new grip and the traditional grip?

Exercise 3 Cuts from Pflug

To perform this exercise, perform each cut from right Pflug using an increasing or passing step. This can be done in the air or against a pell. Pause at the completion of the cut and consider these factors in order.

- Balance at the completion of the cut
- Speed, including any predatory actions
- Power of the cut

Record your findings in the space below.

Cuts from Right Pflug

2	7	1
6		5
4	8	3

Cuts from Left Pflug

2	7	1
6		5
4	8	3

Exercise 4 Cutting into Ochs and Pflug

Starting in right Ochs, perform a number 1 cut into left Pflug. From there, perform a number 4 cut back into right Ochs. Repeat several times, then use 2 and 3 cuts to transition between left Ochs and right Pflug. Pay close attention the posture and footwork.

Exercise 5 Meyer's Cross

We return to Meyer's cross from Chapter 1, this time using Ochs and Plug instead of just Langort.

Discussion

3. What differences did you find between using Ochs and Pflug in Meyer's cross as opposed to just Langort.

Slashes with the Short Edge

Though we've been focusing on long edge cuts, Meyer instructs us to also learn to employ the short edge. One way to use the short edge is to slash upwards with a 3, 4, or 8 cut. This can be used offensively or as a parry. When doing the latter, you'll want to take an off-line step.

Exercise 6 Simple Attacks and Parries

As with Ochs, perform the attack and parry exercise for Pflug. Again, for the purpose of this exercise you may not use thrusts.

Parries while in Right Pflug

1	7	2
5		6
3	8	4

Parries while in Left Pflug

1	7	2
5		6
3	8	4

Discussion

4. Do you feel your head is adequately protected while in this guard?

Exercise 7 Nachreisen against Pflug

Here we see another Nachreisen play directly from the manual.

Joachim Meyer

Now if he attacks from the lower guards (whether he fights from the left or right side), then as soon as he goes up, see that you pursue him at once under his sword skillfully with the long edge and strike to the nearest opening.

For this exercise, the agent is in either Pflug. The patient should likewise be in Pflug. As with the previous Nachreisen play, the action begins in the patient's measure. As the agent raises this sword for an attack, the patient follows quickly with a rising attack (number 3 or 4 cut) with the long edge to the arms. Again, the patient will step wide while doing this to ensure his safety.

Kronhauw (Crown Cut)

The Kronhauw is one of Meyer's techniques that is supposed to "simultaneously parry and hit", though you may find that the parry happens just before the strike. In other manuals, the moment between the parry and executing the short-edge cut is referred to as the Kron (Crown) guard.

Joachim Meyer

This is executed thus: when you stand in the Plow or else lay on up from below from some posture (concerning which I have spoken in the previous chapter), and your opponent cuts at you from above, then go up with horizontal quillons and catch his stroke in the air on your shield or quillon bar; and as soon as it clashes, push the pommel quickly upward and strike him with the short edge behind his blade on his head; thus have you correctly executed the Crown Cut.

Exercise 8 Kronhauw from Olber and Pflug

In this exercise, you will experiment with using the Kronhauw to parry various descending cuts from Pflug.

Pflug

1	7	2
---	---	---

Chapter 4 – Tag (Day)

This is also known as vom Tag, which is translated as “From the Roof”.

Sigmund Schining ein Ringeck

The fourth guard. From the Roof.

Hold it like this: stand with the left foot forwards, and hold your sword at your right shoulder. Or hold it with outstretched arms above your head. And how you shall fence from these guards, you will find described in this book.

Joachim Meyer

The guard of the Day, which is also called the High Guard [Oberhut], is executed in the following manner: stand with your left foot forward, and hold your sword up over your head so that the point extends right upwards, as shown by the figure on the left in Image C. Now any attack that is delivered from above is said to be executed from the Day or High Guard; therefore this posture is called the Day.

For the purpose of this workbook, we'll refer to these as Low Tag and High Tag respectively.

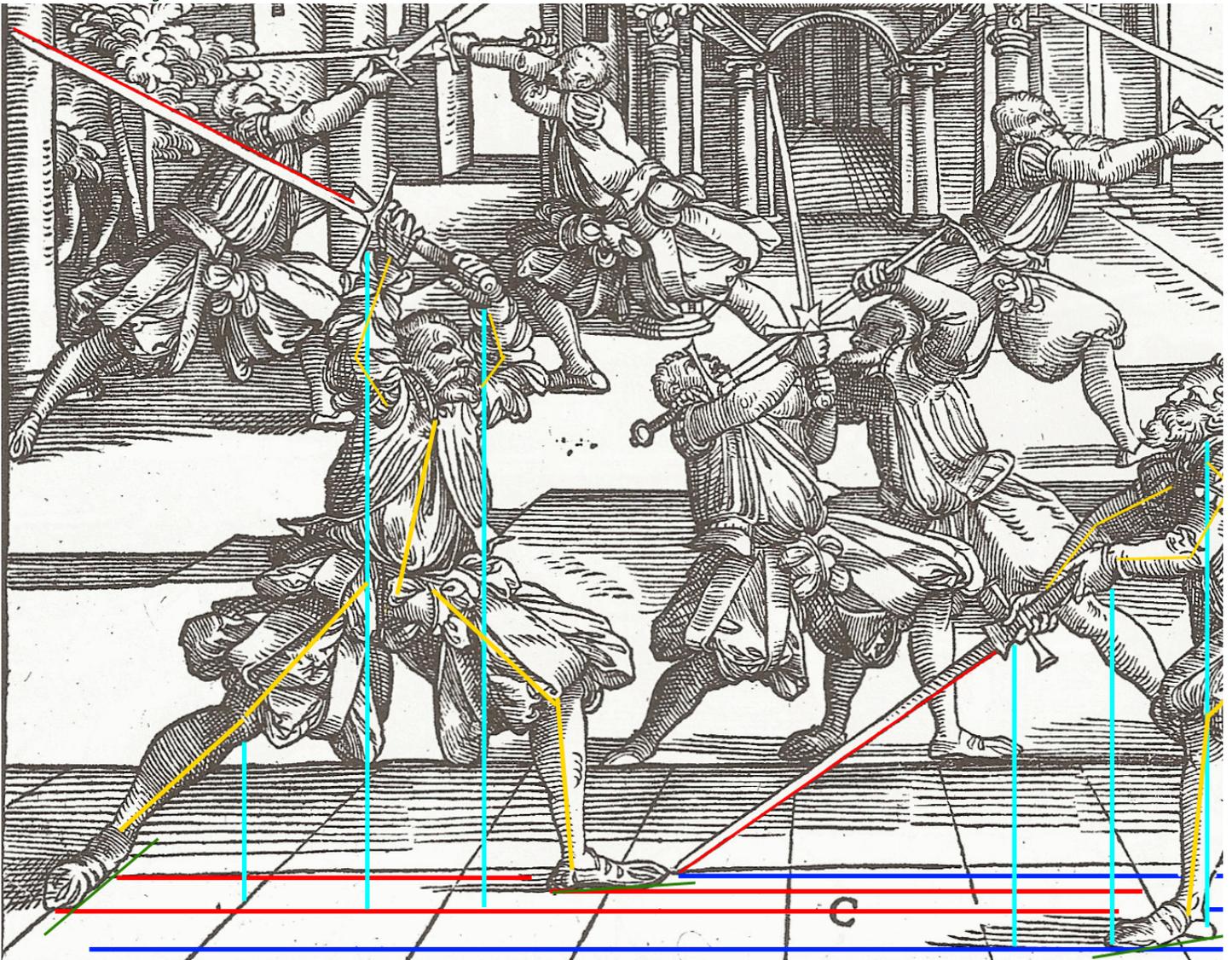


Since Meyer's manual primarily addresses High Tag, this workbook will limit itself to that guard for now. We'll examine Low Tag in depth in a later workbook.

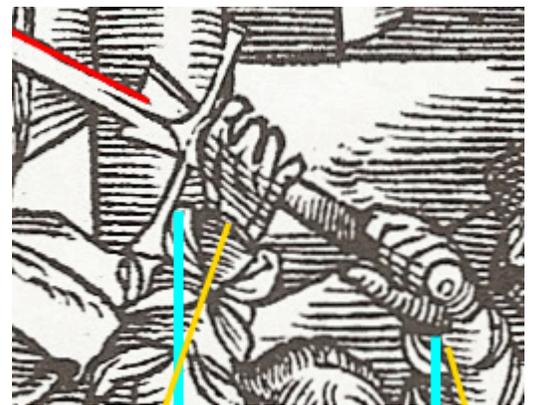
Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 11. Introduction.

Guard Analysis



- Feet (red lines) are in line.
- Back foot is in-line with leg, right foot nearly straight.
- Back leg is straight, front knee is bent so lower leg is straight.
- Loose grip with right hand.
- Tighter grip with left hand.
- Left hand is just above the pommel.
- Point is roughly 45 degrees back
- One hand on either side of head, roughly lined up with hips.
- Body is inclined slightly forward
- Left shoulder is leading.



Exercise 1 Stance

After reviewing the guard analysis page, walk into the guard of Tag and perform any necessary corrections to your stance.



Discussion

1. Do you notice any particular advantages for being in Tag?
2. Are there any attack you think this guard will be particularly bad at resisting?

Exercise 2 Cuts from Tag

This is the same exercise that we saw in Chapter 1, but using Tag instead of Langort as the starting position.

High Combo

Step into Langort with the left foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 1 cut into Langort with the right foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 2 cut. Repeat several times.

Switch feet so that the right foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 2 cut into Langort with the left foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 1 cut. Repeat several times.

Low Combo

Step into Langort with the left foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 3 cut into Langort with the right foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 4 cut. Repeat several times.

Switch feet so that the right foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 4 cut into Langort with the left foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 3 cut. Repeat several times.

Cross Combos from the Right

Step into Langort with the left foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 1 cut into Langort with the right foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 4 cut. Repeat several times.

Step into Langort with the left foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 3 cut into Langort with the right foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 2 cut. Repeat several times.

Cross Combos from the Left

Switch feet so that the right foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 2 cut into Langort with the left foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 3 cut. Repeat several times.

Switch feet so that the right foot forward. Using a passing step, throw a number 4 cut into Langort with the left foot forward. Then stepping backward, throw a number 1 cut. Repeat several times.

Meyer's Cross

Perform the four variants of Meyer's cross. They are repeated here for your convenience.

1-4-3-2 3-2-1-4 2-3-4-1 4-1-2-3

Exercise 3 Cutting into Tag and Pflug

Starting in right Tag, perform a number 1 cut into left Pflug. From there, perform a number 4 slash (short edge) back into right Ochs. Repeat several times, then use 2 and 3 cuts to transition between left Tag and right Pflug. Pay close attention the posture and footwork.

Exercise 4 Simple Attacks and Parries

We repeat our basic attack and parry exercise.

Parries while in Right Tag

1	7	2
5		6
3	8	4

Parries while in Left Tag

1	7	2
5		6
3	8	4

Krumphauw (Crooked Cut)

For most cuts, the point of the sword draws a straight line from the fencer's perspective. The Krumphauw instead traces an arc, which is why some choose to translate it as "arc cut".

Joachim Meyer

The Crooked Cuts are executed in many ways, for all cuts that are delivered with crossed hands are called Crooked Cuts; [...]. It also doesn't matter whether they are done with the short or long edge, as long as you hold your hands crosswise.



Exercise 5 Using the Krumphau from Tag

Joachim Meyer

This cut is executed thus: stand in the Wrath Guard with your left foot forward; if your opponent cuts at you, then step with your right foot well out from his stroke toward his left side; cut with the long edge and crossed hands against his cut, or across on his hands between his head and blade, and let the blade shoot well over his arm, as can be seen in Image D in the figures on the upper right.

We'll modify this exercise slightly by having both fencers start in Tag instead of Zornhut (Wrath Guard), but the rest of the actions remain the same. The agent will start in measure cut as per the table below. The patient will step with his right foot while parrying the attack using a Krumphauw.

As before, take notes as to its effectiveness against each of the three attacks.

Using Parries while in Left Tag

1	7		
		5	
			3

In latter workbooks we'll see how Meyer builds upon this simple parry to create various devices.

Chapter 5 – Olber (Fool)

Note that in other manuals this is spelled Alber.

Sigmund Schining ein Ringeck

The third guard. The Fool.

Hold it like this: stand with your right foot forwards, and hold your sword with outstretched arms in front of you with the point towards the ground.

Joachim Meyer

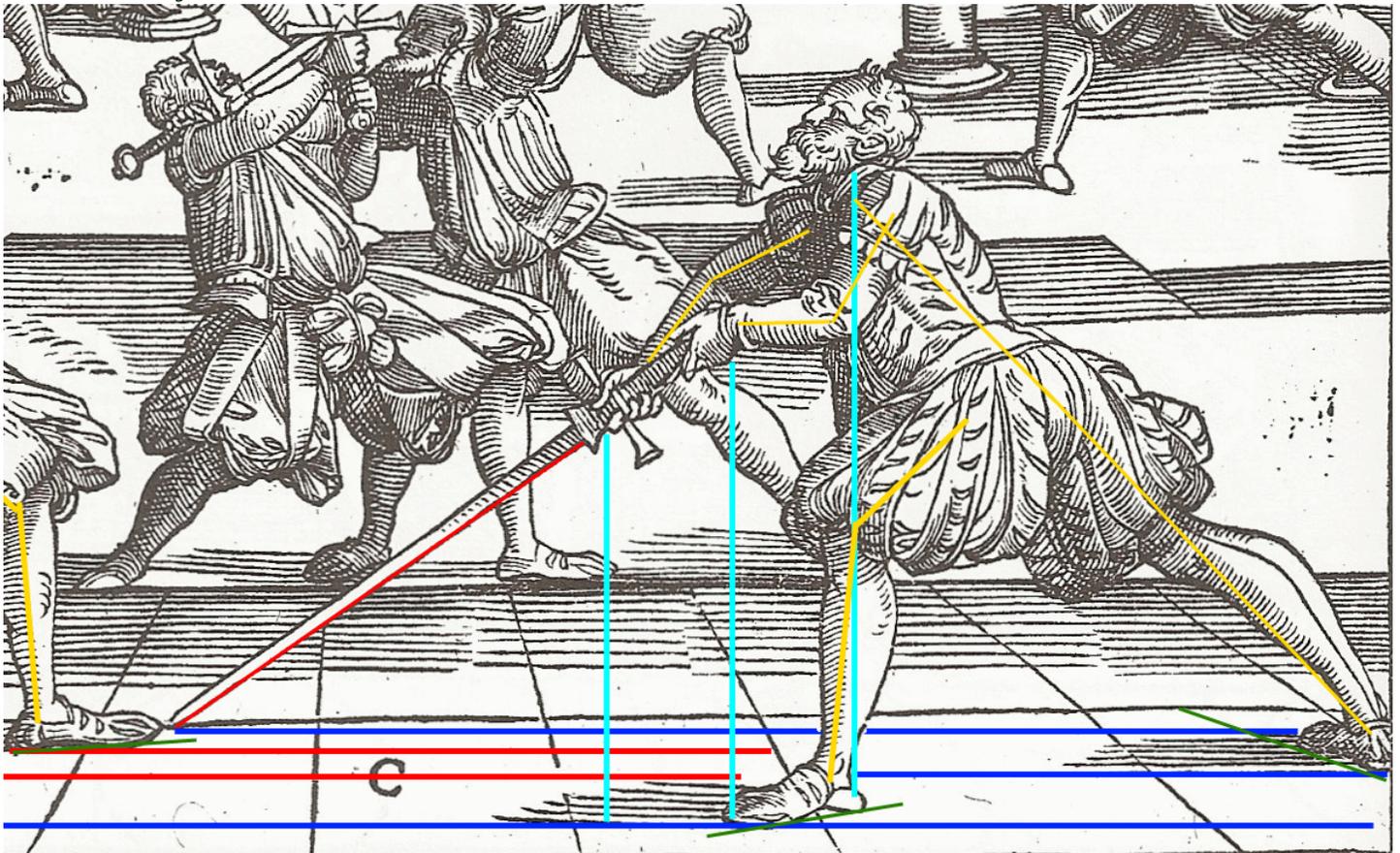
The Fool in my opinion takes its name from the word Alber, which is to say 'simple-minded', since from this guard no proper stroke can be readily achieved, unless one gathers for a new cut after the opponent's cut has been caught by means of a parry, which is truly the part of a fool and simple man, to allow someone to strike him without a prepared counterstroke. It is performed thus: stand with your left foot forward, and hold your sword with the point extended toward the ground in front of you before your forward foot, such that the short edge lies above, the long edge below. Thus you lie properly in this guard, as you can see in the same image [C] on the right.

Notice how Ringeck prefers his Olber somewhat to the side while Meyer extends it directly forward.

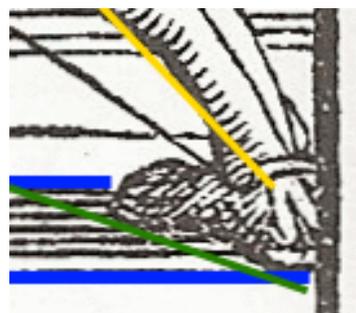
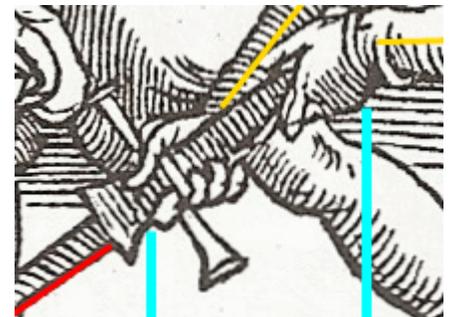


Again, this guard can be performed with either foot forward.

Guard Analysis



- Left foot is turned slightly out.
- Right foot is turned out, but not quite 90 degrees.
- Right foot is flat on the ground.
- Left foot (blue line) is to outside of the opponent's feet (red lines).
- Body forms a straight line to the rear foot.
- Head is tilted upwards.
- Head and shoulders are directly above left knee and foot.
- Left knee is bent so lower foot is 90 degrees to the ground.
- Rear leg is straight.
- Left hand is above the front foot.
- Both arms are somewhat bent.
- Index finger is over the quillon.
- Thumb is raised onto the flat of the sword.
- Left hand is just above the pommel.
- Lone edge (red) is turned slight to the left.
- Point is extended nearly to opponent's foot.



Exercise 1 Stance

After reviewing the guard analysis page, walk into the guard of Tag and perform any necessary corrections to your stance.



Discussion

3. Do you notice any particular advantages for being in Olber?
4. Are there any attack you think this guard will be particularly bad at resisting?

Safety Warning

Meyer's version of Olber involves putting the index finger over the quillion. While this can be done in solo forms, it is very dangerous to attempt this grip during partner drills or sparring. Modern fencing gloves do not provide the necessary protection to prevent the finger from being crushed between the quillion and the opponent's blade.

Exercise 2 Grip Changes

As per the safety warning above, this grip change exercise should not be done with a partner. Nonetheless, these exercises are important for increasing the nimbleness of the hands.

Cutting from Tag into Olber, change your grip so that the finger slides over the quillon. Then slash upwards, sliding the finger back behind.

Starting in Olber, raise the sword into the Kron position. Again, consider how and when the grip change occurs.

Discussion

5. Where in each of the three transitions did you move your finger over/away from the quillon?
6. What advantages, if any, do you see from using this grip change?

Exercise 3 Cuts from Olber

As with most of our guards, not all cuts can be used effectively from this posture without significant preparatory actions.

Cuts from Olber

2	7	1
6		5
4	8	3

Exercise 4 Cutting into and out of Olber

Starting in right Tag, perform a number 7 cut into left Olber. From there, perform a number 8 slash (short edge) back into right Tag. Repeat several times, and then switch feet and repeat. Pay close attention the posture and footwork.

Then repeat the exercise, cutting between Ochs and Olber.

Exercise 5 Simple Attacks and Parries

Again we use our basic attack and parry exercise with right and left Olber.

Parries while in Right Olber

1	7	2
5		6
3	8	4

Parries while in Left Olber

1	7	2
5		6
3	8	4

Exercise 6 Kronhauw from Olber

According to Meyer, Kronhauw can be used from many of the low postures, not just Pflug. So we'll repeat the exercise to see how it works from Olber.

Olber with Kronhauw

1	7	2
---	---	---

Exercise 7 Krumphauw from Olber

Like the Kronhau, the Krumphauw can be used from any low guard.

In this exercise, you will experiment with using the Kronhauw to parry various descending cuts from Olber.

Olber with Krumphauw

1	7	5	3
---	---	---	---

Chapter 6 – Secondary Guards

In *The Art of Combat*, there is a variety of secondary guards. Meyer considers each is considered to be a variant of one of the four primary guards. We'll look at them in depth later, but for now it is sufficient to just know their names.

Brechfenster – Break Window

This guard is used for close-in fighting. It occurs more readily with sharp swords, as they tend to “bite” into each other, which in turn pushes the points upward. Meyer doesn't illustrate this posture, so we turn to Jörg Wilhalm.

Joachim Meyer

This is essentially a variation on Tag and is only used in the bind after you have come under your opponent's sword; but from a distance while you still see your opponent's point and blade in front of you, you should not go into this guard, for you are not at all safe in it. But as soon as you have come under your opponent's sword, then it is one of the chief guards.



Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 11.

Einhorn – Unicorn

If you stand in Ochs and raise the point, you form the guard Einhorn.

Joachim Meyer

[...] go with crossed hands up to your right, so that the tip extends up in the air; this is called the Unicorn, and you stand as you can see in Image E in the figure on the right.

The term Winging is not defined, but seems to be a series of rising cuts with the long edge.

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapters 3 and 11.

Eisenport – Irongate

Since Meyer refers to the Italian posture Porta di Ferro, we offer this illustration from Marozzo. Note how the hands are held higher than Pflug, but not quite as high and extended as it would be in Langort. It is called the “Iron Gate” because of its strong defensive potential.

Joachim Meyer

You will find the true Eisenport presented more fully later in the treatise on rapier combat. For since thrusting with the sword is abolished among us Germans, this guard has also entirely fallen into disuse and been lost; however these days the Italians and other nations use it.



Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 11. Also Part 3.

Gerade Veratzung – Straight Parrying

This guard is primarily used in Meyer's rapier text, but it does appear in an Einhorn play.

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 11, Unicorn.



Hangetort – Hanging Point

This guard is used primarily to parry blows. It is rare to be in this posture for more than a moment.

Joachim Meyer

The figure on the right in the same image [F] teaches you how to execute the Hanging Point, except that it does not show the arms extended enough. Therefore position yourself in this guard thus: stand with your right foot forward, and hold your weapon with arms extended in front of you such that the blade hangs somewhat down toward the ground. This posture is quite similar to the Ox, except that in the Ox you hold the arms vertically, but here they shall be extended forward in front of your face, and you let the sword hang toward the ground, which is why it is called the Hanging Point.



Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Part 3.

Mittelhut – Middle Guard

This guard, primarily used with the dussack, is used in a handful of techniques. In addition to the illustration with the dussack, we offer Paulus Hector Mair's version using the longsword.

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 11.



Nebenhut – Side Guard

Another guard that isn't illustrated, it may refer to this image from Mair. Note that Mair says that it can be performed on either side.

Joachim Meyer

In this guard, position yourself thus: stand with your left foot forward, hold your sword by your right side, with the point toward the ground, so that the pommel stands upwards, and the short edge toward you.

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 11.



Schlüssel – Key

Later Meyer will say that any guard can be countered with the Schlüssel.

Joachim Meyer

The Key is illustrated in Image D. If you stand with your left foot forward and hold your sword with the hilt and crossed hands in front of your chest, so that the short edge lies on your left arm and the point is toward your opponent's face, then this posture or guard is correctly executed.

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapter 11.



Schrankhut – Crossed Guard

Meyer says that this guard is often incorrectly called Eisenport. Later he will make the same mistake.

Joachim Meyer

Now the Crossed Guard is when you hold your sword with crossed hands in front of you with the point toward the ground, as is clearly to be seen in the following Image F.

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapters 3 and 11. Listed as Irongate in Chapter 11.



Wechsel – Changer

Joachim Meyer

This guard is executed thus: stand with your right foot forward and hold your weapon with the point or foible extended toward the ground by your side, so that the short edge faces toward your opponent, as you can see in the figure in Image D.

Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapters 3 and 11.



Zornhut – Wrath Guard

This posture is a form of invitation, used to deceive the opponent about how close you are.

Joachim Meyer

The Wrath Guard is so named because this posture displays a wrathful attitude. It is done thus: stand with your left foot forward, and hold your sword on your right shoulder, such that the blade hangs down behind prepared for a stroke. And it is to be noted here that all the techniques that are executed from the guard of the Ox can also be carried out from the Wrath posture, except that one uses different conduct to deceive the opponent in this quarter; and sometimes you can use this guard, sometimes the other. Concerning it, see Image E.



Further Reading

Art of Combat, Book 1, Chapters 3 and 11. Also Part 3.

Exercise 1: A Routine for the Guards

Though not common in the German tradition, routines are a very important learning tool for learning martial arts. Known as an Assault in Italian or Kata in Asian traditions, this serves as both a good workout and a way to memorize the postures, cuts, and other techniques. Note that while many routines are designed meant to be used in actual fights, this particular one focuses on just moving through the guards.

1. Stand at attention with the sword resting on your left shoulder.
2. Pass the right hand across the body and seize the grip close to the quillons.
3. Bring the sword perpendicularly in front of the body with the quillons in line with the mouth.
4. **Step back with the right foot** while **raising the sword** into **Tag (High or Day)**.
5. **Turn out the right foot** while **winding** the sword into **Zornhut (Wrath Guard)**.
6. **Pass forward the right foot** while cutting a **Zornhauw** through **Langort (Longpoint)** into **Left Wechsel (Changer)**.
7. **Pass forward the left foot** while **slashing with the short edge** through **Langort** into **Right Ochs (Ox)**.
8. **Passing back**, throw an **Underhauw** through **Left Ochs** into **Einhorn (Unicorn)**.
9. **Passing back again**, throw an **Underhauw** through **Right Ochs** into **Einhorn**.
10. **Lower the sword** into **Schlüssel (Key)**.
11. **Pass forward the right foot** while **thrusting** into **Gerade Veratzung (Straight Parrying)**.
12. **Pass back the right foot** into **Eisenport (Irongate)** with the pommel to your left and the arms uncrossed.
13. **Pass forward the right foot** with a **Mittlehauw** through **Langort** into **Left Mittelhut (Middle Guard)**.
14. **Pass forward the left foot** with a **Mittlehauw** through **Langort** into **Right Mittelhut**.
15. **Pass forward the right foot** while **cutting an Oberhauw** into **Olber**.
16. **Pass back the right foot** while **drawing the sword up** into **Nebenhut (Side Guard)** on the left side.
17. **Pass back the right foot** while cutting into **Right Pflug (Plow)**.
18. **Gather back the right foot** to the left while **extending the arms** into **Hangetort (Hanging Point)**.
19. **Push forward the right foot** while **crossing the arms** into **Schrankhut (Crossed Guard)**.
20. **Pass forward the left foot forward** while **slashing** into **Langort (Longpoint)**.
21. **Pass back the left foot** while **winding** the sword **Right Nebenhut**.
22. **Pass forward the left foot** forward while **cutting** into **Left Pflug**.
23. **Pass forward the right foot** while **slashing** into **Tag**.
24. **Turn out the left foot** while **winding** into **Left Zornhut**.
25. **Draw back the right foot** while returning the sword to the left shoulder.

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