

Meisterhäue in a different way

Different modern interpretations and contemporary versions of Liechtenauers five cuts

Script to the Seminar held on the Dreynevent on Feb. 12th 2011

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1. Introduction

There are different modern interpretations of the techniques described in the fightbooks. Just have a look at the discussions on hema-forums/youtube or better: visit seminars from other training-groups. These deviations are the natural result of the process of reconstruction. In some cases it may be impossible to judge, whether one or the other interpretation is correct, because the sources simply aren't explicit enough (regarding footwork for example). Comparing the own interpretation with others' is a valuable way of improving.

But there are also differences in the glosses themselves, which cannot only be traced back to copying mistakes done by daft employees in the scriptorium. Some of these seem to be just different contemporary interpretations of Liechtenauers verses, others show – in my opinion – a development of longsword-fencing during the centuries. Aspects of this change are:

Change of the weapon: Longer swords create a longer distance between the fencers. Two blades each 20 cm longer than was common before will bring about 40 cm more distance, which means a complete additional step is needed to reach the opponent. Additionally the weapon gets heavier and slower.¹ On the other side there is a big difference between fencing with a light and fast “feder” and a much heavier, maybe sharp real longsword. The appearing additional parrying elements like hooks or side-rings after 1500 will also have changed the swordplay.

Change of the basic stance: Besides the distance it seems that also the basic stance changed, especially in the bind: In the earlier pictures (let's say until the end of the 15th century) the techniques are executed more in a position that the *Nürnberg Ms.* (GNM 3227a) calls “shortened sword” (here **not** halfsword!). This means that the hilt is held low and drawn back to the side of the hips, closing the line in a shorter distance. Later illustrations of the same techniques show very high and long reaching positions, where the hilt is in a direct line to the opponent in front of the upper openings. While the author of the *Nürnberg Ms.* mocks on the long position, later treatises recommend it, e.g. in the *Codex Wallerstein* (WALLERSTEIN 1450-70)²:

GNM 3227a, fol. 40r	
... / Wy wol etzliche leychmeistere • dy vornichten / vnd sprechen is sy gar swach was aus den winden ku~pt / vnd neñen is / aus dem korczen sw ^o te / dorvmme das sy slecht vnd eynveldik dar gen / vnd meynen das sy / aus dem langen sw ^o te gefochten / was dar get / mt gestracken armen / vnd mt gestrackten swerte / vnd was gar veyntlich	Like many “leichtmeister” [literal “easy masters”], who put it down and say, that it is weak what comes from the winding, call it [fighting] “from the short sword” [!], and think it is bad and brainless. They think, that “from the long sword” it is to be fought with extended arms and extended sword, and it comes adversarial and strong from

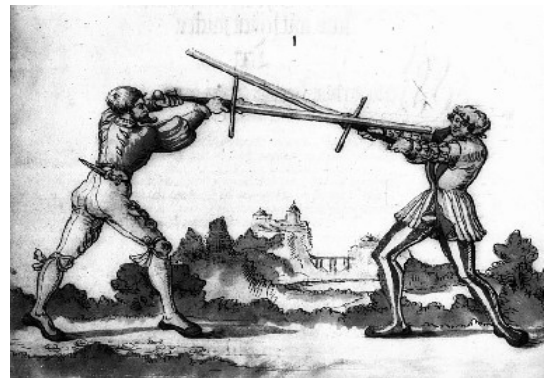
- 1 Looking at the illustrations in the fechtbücher and at the real swords in the museums, it seems that the weapons became longer and heavier during the time. But this is only a statistical tendency: There are some pretty long and heavy swords with two-handed grips in the 13/14th century, while there are light ones of only medium blade length in the 16th.
- 2 But the *Codex Wallerstein* is actually not in the Liechtenauer-tradition.

<p><i>vnd stark von allen kreften des leybes dar get / nur durch wol stehens wille / vnd das is grawsam an czu sehñ ist / wen sich eyn° alzo strekt / recht zam her eynen hazen wolle irlawfen / vnd daz ist alles nicht / weder dy winden vnd weder lichtnaw°s kunst / wen do ist keyne sterke weder / deñe worvmme wer anders kunst / solde allemal dy sterke vörczihen /</i></p>	<p>all the strength of the body, only by good standing. And this is awful to see, when someone is stretching himself in this way like he wants to catch [literal: “run after”] a rabbit. That has nothing to do, nor with the windings, nor with Liechtenauers art, because there is no strength. Then why should it be an art, if you prefer [only] the strength?</p>
<p>WALLERSTEIN 1450-70, fol. 3r</p>	
<p><i>Item so du mit ainem wichest und zu im kumst an das swert das ir paid an hapt gebund so reck dein arm und dein swert lanck von [d]ir und secz dich mit dem leib nider in dy wag und sich dastu leng und masse in dem swert habst so magstu arbaiten und weren [*/] alles das dar notturft [*/] ist dy leng ist dastu hinter deinem swert stest und reckst dich dy masse ist dastu nider stest als hie gemalt stet und mach dich klain mit dem leib so pistu gross im swert</i></p>	<p>When you fence with someone and you come to him that you both get into bind, so elongate your arm and sword long from you and set your body down in the “waag” [the position “balance”], that you have length and measure in the sword. So you can work and defend [*/] everything that is necessary [*/] is the length that you stand behind your sword and elongate yourself, that you stand deep like painted here and make yourself small with the body that you are large in the sword.</p>
<p>* – This sentence is a bit strange: to me it seems, that the end of the former sentence (between the */.../*), is at the same time the beginning of the latter.</p>	



Fig. 1: Zornhau-Ort by KAL 1468-75 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Cgm 1507)

Fig. 2: Zornhau-Ort in the GOLIATH 1510-20 (Biblioteka Jagiellonski Krakau, Ms. germ. Quart. 2020)



Watch the distance and the position of the swords, both pictures should show the same technique!

A possible reason for the change of distance and stance might be the...

Change of intention: Did the later masters practise fencing just as a sport in the “*Fechtschul*” (organised public tournament)? - Not really: The general assumption that longsword fencing developed from a “deadly martial art” to a “degenerated sport” somewhere in the time between 1400 to 1600 is far to simple. Fencing “*zu schimpf*” (entertaining) as training and competition is already mentioned in the *Nürnberg Ms.* (1389/90) and moreover plays an important role in the centuries before. On the other side Meyer (1570) still emphasises the utility of fencing for real combat (MEYER1570, fol. 1v). But of course the rules of later “*Fechtschulen*” change the preferences for specific fencing techniques and the performance of the single technique – you do what you exercise, also in real combat. A fact already recognized by Meyer:

<p>MEYER 1570, fol. 3v</p>	
<p><i>nach dem gebrauch der Alten Teutschen Fechter / bey welchen das Stechen so wol als das Hauwen zugelassen / jedoch die weil bey uns Teutschen jetziger zeit / unsonderlich in der Handarbeit mit den Winden / am meisten unnd fürnemsten nach dem Haupt gefochten wirdt</i></p>	<p>In the conventions of the old German fencers, both thrusting and cutting were allowed. But we Germans of our days especially use the “hand work” [working from the bind] with the winding, the most time and the most distinguished, to fence to the head.</p>

In this seminar I want to present some of these different interpretations exemplified by the mastercuts. On the one hand this should show the range of possible interpretations for a single

technique, just as food for thought to question the own point of view. On the other hand I'd like to point out, that there is not a statical fencing-system after Liechtenauer. Instead it was a living tradition, which shows al lot of variations during the time and by changing authors. A fact that should be in mind, while reconstructing a lost martial art.

2. Different Mastercuts

2.1 The Zornhau

2.1.1 Zornhau-Ort – the common interpretation

DANZIG 1452, fol. 13r-v	
<p>Wer dir oberhawt zornhaw ort dem drawt</p> <p> <i>Glosa</i> <i>Merck der zornhaw pricht mit dem ort alle oberhaw vnd ist doch anders nicht wenn ein slächter paurñ slagk vnd den treib also Wenn dw mit dem zu° vechten zu ym kumst haut er dir denn von seiner rechtñ seitten oben ein zu° dem kopff So haw auch von dein° rechten seitten von oben an alle vor satzung Mit im zornigklich ein auf sein swert Ist er denn waich öm swert so seiß im den ort gericht für sich lanck ein vnd stich im zu° dem [13v] gesicht oder der prüst So setz im an</i></p>	<p>Who cuts you from above is threatened by zornhau ort</p> <p>Gloss: The zornhau breaks with the ort all oberhaus [cuts from above], still it is only a simple farmers cut. Do it this way: When you come to him in the “zufechten” [entering in close distance], and he cuts you from his right down to your head, so you also have to cut down from your right without any parrying angry on his sword. If he then is soft on his sword, so shoot [thrust] with the ort long from you and stab him to the face or breast and set [your sword] on him.</p>

Interpretation: Your opponent is in the “Vor” and attacks you with an oberhau. Cut with an oberhau on his sword into the lower hanging, while stepping to the side out of his attack (you don't need to go in: he's coming). In the resulting bind, your ort should be directed to his opening, in the same time his line of attack is closed. Then thrust with a second movement to his opening.

Winning the line works best, when you really counter in the “Nach” (when he started the attack and thinks “got you”). When you get him there, you hit his blade in a weak position – his sword already stretched out long – with your middle in his weak of the blade. Redirect yourself immediately with a double step³, so that you can choose any footwork you need for the thrust (half step forward/back...).

2.1.2 Zornhau-Ort – one move

This version of the zornhau is described in the *Nürnberg Ms.* (GNM 3227a), in our group we call it the “Thomas Stöppler-interpretation”:

GNM 3227a, fol. 23r-v	
<p>Das ist von dem Czornhawe etc</p> <p><i>Der dir oberhawet / czornhaw ort deme drewet / (...) Glos / Hie merke vnd wisse das lichtenaw° / eyn oberhaw slecht von der achsel / heisset den czornhaw / Den eyn wen eym itzlichem in syne grymme vnd czorne [23v] zo ist im keyn haw als bereit / als der selbe aberhaw slecht von der achsel / czum manne / Darum meynt lichtenawer / Wen dir eyner czu hewt / mit eym obirhaw / zo salt du keyn im weder hawen den czornhaw / alszo das du mit dyme ort vaste keyn im schisset / ...</i></p>	<p>That is of the Zornhau etc.</p> <p>Who cuts you from above is threatened by zornhau ort (...) Gloss: Here learn and know that Liechtenauer cuts an oberhau from the shoulder that is named zornhau. This one [?], when another one in his wraith and anger [cuts you?], is no cut as useful as the same oberhau, cut down from the shoulder to the man. Therefore Liechtenauer says: When someone cuts to you with a oberhau so you shall cut against him the zornhau, in the way that you shoot your ort fast and strong against him.</p>

³ This footwork is not directly described until Joachim Meyer (MEYER 1570, fol. 24r) – I think it's essential (my interpretation).

Interpretation: Your opponent is in the “Vor” and attacks you with an oberhau. Cut with an oberhau to his upper opening (head or breast) with a long cut-and-thrust-in-one movement (like the “Stichschlag” in I.33), while stepping to the side out of his attack (no need to rush in – stepping while cutting and going offline is described extensively as fundamental in the manuscript). The verb “schießen” (to shoot) seems to imply “to thrust” but means also “to reach out”, so that in my opinion it could also denote a cut with the ort.

This technique is actually based on the same principles as the “common version” above: Using the “Nach” and closing the line are essential here, too. You just save some footwork and space, the movement is reduced and distilled in a very sophisticated way, while the common version seems to be a broken down didactic version for beginners. And the distance is shorter, which fits to the shorter blades in the late 1300s.

2.1.3 Zornhau-Ort and winding in – something completely different

Especially the footwork can be done in a completely different way however, than described before: While the first two shown versions use stepping for going offline (see fig. 1), you can also cut a zornhau without a step (ignoring the advices in the *Nürnbergger Ms.*) as described by Peter Falkner (see below) or even crossing the line. Another change is, that since the beginning of the 16th century there are many pictures showing the zornhau in a high winding-in position (see fig. 2), which was originally only one of the possible following techniques.

FALKNER 1490, fol. 2v	
<i>Den zornhaw trib mit sterck Hinder rugk das eben merck Von baiden seiden Stilsteen oder mit schreytten .</i>	Execute the zornhau with strength. Note that to the back [? also possible: “from behind”, “back”, “backwards”], from both sides, stand still or with steps.

Fig. 4: “wind and thrust” by KAL 1468-75 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Cgm 1507)

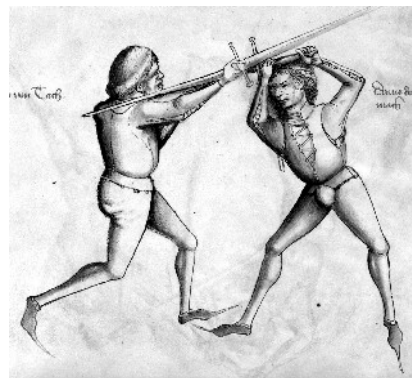
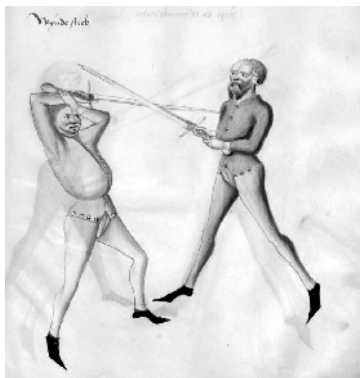


Fig. 3: “from there make a neck slicing”, TALHOFFER 1467 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Cod.icon. 394a)

Mind the step!

Interpretation: Your opponent attacks you with an oberhau. You block this in the “Nach” or “Indes” with an oberhau on his sword without any stepping (this is really a non-Liechtenauer-approved emergency-parry). Now you have a complete step for the winding-in: wind in ox against his sword while crossing his line of attack with a cross-step (watch the position of the feet in the pictures above) and thrust or carve. Your opponent ends up in a very twisted and wrenched position.

2.2 Krumphau

The Krumphau (translated “bent-” or “hooked cut”) is a source of never ending discussions since the reconstruction of HEMA began. It was defined as “windscreen-wiper” or in a more recent attempt as “off-line cut” (BRADAK 2009, 3). Meyer has another interesting but little noticed definition: “The krumphaus are done in many ways, because all cuts done with entangled or

crossed hands were named krumphaus. Because of that also the one schielhau [done with crossed hands from the left] is counted to the krumphaus. This is valid when they are done with the half as well as with the long edge, when you lead the hands crosswise” (MEYER 1570, fol. 47r).

2.2.1 Krumphau in the “Nach” – the common interpretation

<p>DANZIG 1452, fol. 17v</p>	
<p><i>Haut er dir dann oben zu° der plöss So haw starck mit der langen schneid aus gekräützten armen gegen seinem haw vnd als pald die swert zu° sam-en klitzen So wind indes gegen deiner lincken seitten die kurtz schneid an sein swert vnd stich ym zu° dem gesicht Oder wildu yn nicht stechen So haw ym Indes mit der kurtzen schneid vom swert zu° kopff oder zw° leib (...)</i></p>	<p>When he cuts you to the upper [or: from above] opening, so cut strong with the long edge from/with crossed arms against his cut, and in the moment when both swords clash together, then wind “indes” [in the same movement] against your left side the short edge on his sword and thrust him to the face. Or, if you don't want to stab him, so cut him “indes” with the short edge from the sword to the head or the body.</p>
<p><i>Merck den krump haw magstu auch treiben aus der schranck hu°t von paiden seittñ vnd in die hu°t schick dich also wenn dw mit dem zu° vechten zw° ym kumpst So ste mit dem lincken fuess vor vnd halt dein swert mit dem ort neben deiner rechten seitten auff der erden das die lang schneid oben sey (...)</i></p>	<p>Know, that you can make the krumphau also from the “schranchhut” from both sides. Go into that guard, when you come to him in the “zufechten” [entering]. Stand there with the left foot forwards and keep your sword with the ort on your right side on the floor with the long edge up. (...)</p>

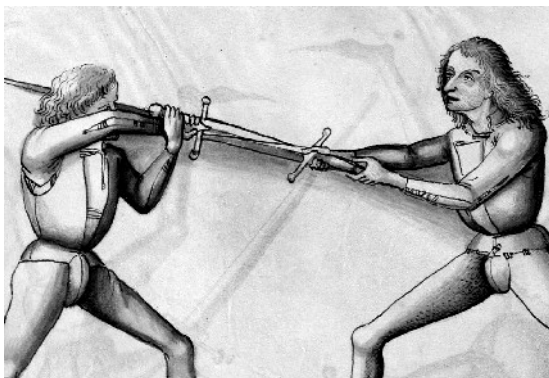


Fig. 5: *Krump to the blade* by TALHOFFER 1467, detail (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Cod.icon. 394a)



Fig. 6: *And 103 years later from the other side* by MEYER 1570, detail

...in the flat of the strong.

Interpretation: Your opponent attacks you with an oberhau. You dodge this in the “Nach” or “Indes” with a big step to the right. The windscreen-wiper krumphau is executed with the thumb-grip and vertical blade, so that your long edge (when coming from the right) hits the flat of his strong or – primary target – his hands. The vertical blade is also indicated by executing the krumphau from the schrankhut (which seems me to be a quite big, slow an a broken down didactic version for beginners...).

2.2.2 Krumphau with the flat to the hands (Nürnberg Ms.)

<p>GNM 3227a, fol. 25v</p>	
<p><i>Glosa / Hie merke vnd wisse das der krumphaw / ist eyn oberhaw der do mit eyme guten ausschrete / krummes dar / get / zam noch eyner seitten / Dorvem meynt lichtnawer / der den selben haw wol wil furen / der sal wol beseicz aus schreiten czu der rechten hant / dañe her den haw brengt / vnd sal synen ort / werfen / ader schißen / ieme ober syn gehilcze of / dy hende / vnd sal nmit syner flechen hawen / wen her deñe trift / ienes swert</i></p>	<p>Gloss: Here learn and know that the krumphau is an oberhau, done with a good step out, bent to one side. Therefore Liechtenauer says, who wants to make the very same cut, should step to the right side, when he executes the cut, and shall throw or thrust his ort at him [his opponent] over the crossguard on the hands, and he shall beat with the flat, when he hits his sword, so he should remain strong on it and push fast and intense and should</p>

/zo sal her stark dor of bleiben / vnd vaste drucken / vnd sal sehen / was her deñe am endlichsten vnd geradsten / dar brengen mag / mit hewen stichen ader sneten / vnd sal mit nichte czu korcz hawen / ...	see, what he could execute the fastest and directest way, with cuts, thrusts or carving, and he should not cut to short...
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Interpretation: The *Nürnberg* Ms. explicitly mentions to beat with the flat to the hands. This movement is very quick and more like a oberhau, but still: Dodging with a sidestep and doing an “offline-cut” is the same as in the more common interpretation above.

So why hitting with the flat? Two very good reasons, which made the technique one of my favourites: 1) The hit gets very fast and direct, you can execute it directly from the “vom Tag” on the shoulders and after the first hit, your blade is in the perfect position for the following attack. All without any turning/rolling of the blade. 2) A hit with the flat to the hands will hurt more than a clean cut, at least in the first moment.

2.2.3 Krumphau to the flat and “Umschnappen” [snapping around] – hard and soft

Because the krumphau does not attack a vital target, especially when you only hit the opponents blade, the sources mention a subsequent attack (I recommend always to train the krump with this secondary attack!). In the bind, when the opponent sticks strong on your blade, it is a winding-in in the ox. When the bind is broken by beating the adversaries blade away, the technique is called “Umschnappen”. This second movement gives the time for the second part of my recommended double-step to redirect yourself. There are two possible interpretations of the blade-movement:

a) hard – the bouncing hammer: as described in the *Nürnberg* Ms. or depicted by Talhoffer use the re-bounce impulse of your sword for a short-edge-unterhau [cut from below] to the upper openings of your opponent.

b) soft – the rotating whip: Some sources mention an oberhau with the short edge to the head (e.g. RINGECK 1440, fol. 25v-r). This movement can also be done with a back-bouncing from the opponents blade. But it is also possible and far more comfortable to perform a rotating whip-like movement, by letting the sword run through from the krump to the snapping. The movement of the ort resembles a bend horizontal “8” on your left side. For this you should start the krump earlier – “Indes” – and fetch the opponents blade in the weak.

The krump to the opponents blade with a subsequent attack is already described in the *Nürnberg* Ms., but far not as extensively as in the glosses of the later treatises. It seems that attacking the blade was prevalent since the second half of the 15th century, which might correlate to longer blades and longer distance (rarely allowing a direct hit to the hands) in that time.

2.2.4 Krumphau against the ox – the common interpretation

GOLIATH 1510-20, fol. 18r	(translation by ZABINSKI 2010)
(...) <i>Wen du mit dem zufechten zu im kumpst, steet er dan gegen dir und helt sein schwert für sein haupt in der hut des Ochsens, auf seiner lincken seiten, so setz den lincken vus vor; und halt dein schwert an deiner rechten achselnn, in der hut, unnd spring mit dem rechten fus, wol auf dein recht seyten, gegen im, und schlag mit der langen schneid, aus gekreuzten armen, uber die hend</i>	(...) when you come to him in an armed manner and he stands against you and holds his sword in front of his head in the guard of the ox on his left side, put the left foot forwards and hold your sword on the right shoulder in the guard. Then, leap with the right foot towards your right side against him and strike to him with the “long” edge from crossed arms, at his hands.

All mastercuts can be used in the “Nach” as counter against an attack or in “Vor” to break a guard (yes, it is better to attack in the entering of the guard). The attacking of ox with the krump didn't make me to happy in the last years: Exercising the technique often feels uncomfortable and foolish, in free-fight I score 2 out of 10 times, 5 times I miss the distance and 3 times I get countered – a good reason to question this...

Interpretation: The krump from the right is executed with a far step forwards and to the right. You attack the hands of your opponent who is standing in the the left ox always on the side of his sword (this is definitely described in the fightbooks).

2.2.5 Krumphau against the ox – the Grzegorz Zabinski-version (GOLIATH 1510-20)

Grzegorz Zabinski delivers an interesting different interpretation of the krump against ox in his new book on the *Goliath Manuscript*.

Interpretation: *“The 'Krumphau' is driven from the right stance (i.e., with the left foot forwards), with a step with the right foot outside to one's right. This secures a convenient access to the opponent's hands and enables the swordsman to step out of the line of the opponents attack. As mentioned, Ringeck strikes the stroke with the 'short' edge. Peter von Danzig and Goliath recommend to attack with the 'long' edge, (...). Another issue is the position of departure. Although the notion of holding the sword on one's shoulder may imply the 'guard from the roof', in this guard the forearms are not crossed. The 'ox' on the right side is therefore the probable point of departure, as the stroke would be in fact delivered 'from crossed arms'. (...)” (ZABINSKI 2010, 251)*

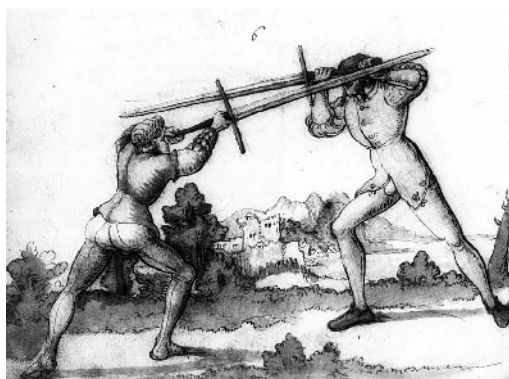


Fig. 7: The picture beneath krumping an Ox in the GOLIATH 1510-20, (Biblioteka Jagiellonski Krakau, Ms. germ. Quart. 2020)

The crux of the matter is to be found in his analysis of the picture (on the left):

“The swordsman on the right stands in the guard of the 'ox' on his left. The swordsman on the left drives the 'crooked stroke' at the hands of the adversary. The position of departure for the striking swordsman was probably the guard of the 'ox' on the right side (with the left foot forwards). From this stance the swordsman stepped forwards with his right foot, while simultaneously 'uncrossing' his arms. This caused a 'throwing' of his sword towards the opponent. The stance of the swordsman implies that the stroke was coordinated with the work of the shoulders and hips in order to secure a proper impact.” (ZABINSKI 2010, 251-252)

In short: The illustration in the *Goliath*, which is as far as I know the only illustration of breaking the ox, shows the krump just the other way around! Like an oberhau with the hilt to the side to close the line or – if done with the short edge – like the “Schielhau”. To gain power you can start in ox as Zabinski recommends or use the “rotating whip” from the technique above, so that the attack is driven by the secondary snapping.

Zabinskis thesis does not seem me to be not completely reliable for me, but still a possible interpretation⁴. The practical usability however, is convincing: Doing this technique feels much better. Now the line is closed, the distance not a problem any more and it works in free play – try it!

2.3 Twerhau

Compared to the krump the interpretation of the twerhau (“zwerch”, “twirch” for “transverse” or “horizontal”) is almost beyond doubt. But I found a second description with a little difference... .

⁴ The term “aus gekreuzten Armen” (from crossed arms) does in my sense for language not describe the departure of the movement but more likely the position in the moment of the hit (a slight detail which is lost in the english translation). Just as well starting from ox is not the only way to uncross the arms. Another thing is, that the illustrations in the *Goliath manuscript* look fine but in some cases seem to simply wrong or at least wrong located – but that's going to far.

2.3.1 Twerhau – the common interpretation

<p>DANZIG 1452, fol. 18v-19r</p>	
<p> Glosa Merck der twer haw pricht die hu^ot vom tag vnd alle haw die von oben nyder gehauen werden vnd die twer treib also wenn du mit dem [19r] zu^o ym kumpst So stee mit dem lincken fuess vor vnd halt dein swert an deiner rechten achsel Stet er denn gegen dir vnd helt sein swert mit auff gerackten armen hoch vber dem haubt vnd drot dir oben ein zw^o hauen So kum du vor im mit dem haw vnd spring mit dem rechten fuess wol auff dein rechte seitten gegen ym vnd ym sprung wind dein swert mit dem gehültz für dein haubt das dein dawmen vnden küm vnd slach ym mit der kurtzen schneid gegen seiner lincken seitten zw dem kopff (...)</p>	<p>Gloss: Know that the twer breaks the guard “vom Tag” and all cuts from above. Do the twer this way: when you come to him, stand with the left foot forward and hold your sword on your right shoulder. If he stands against you, with elongated arms high above his head and threatens to cut you from above, so be faster [in the “Vor”] with the cut, and jump with the right foot to your right against him. In the jump, wind your sword with the hilt in front of your head, that the thumb comes down, and cut with the short edge against his left side to the head (...)</p>

Interpretation: The glosses in the different manuscripts are giving a good idea of how the twer is to be executed and the interpretations of various groups almost look the same. A few years ago there were different opinions on how far the side-step should be (because catching the opponents blade works well without any movement to the side). As far as I see the consensus is now, that the body moves to the side, while the sword remains on the line of attack. The end-position of the horizontal cut is a nearly horizontal blade with the hilt in front of, besides and above the head (this is very strong and stable position). Maybe the cross is a little bit tilted up on the outside, this protects the fingers against an accidental cut through to the cross (I mean a fatal accident of the opponent, who receives a full blow on the head in exchange for a little nick on the fingers...). Again I recommend a double step to regain a good position against the opponent.

2.3.2 Meyers Twerhau

Meyer gives us a little different timing and angle of the attack:

<p>MEYER 1570, fol. 7v</p>	
<p>Zwerch. ZU der Zwerch schick dich also / stell dich im zufechten in die Zornhut zur Rechten (davon in vorgedachte Capitel) das ist / setz deinen Lincken fuß vor / halt dein Schwerdt an deine Rechte Achsel / als ob du ein Zornhaw thun wolltest / Hauwet dan dein gegen Man auff dich von dach oder Oben / so Hauwe zugleich mit halber schneid / von unden uberzwerch gegen seinem hauw / behalt dein kreutz hoch ob deinem Haupt / damit dein Kopff versetzt sey / und mit dem hauw zugleich tritt wol auff seine Lincke seiten / so versetzestu und triffest mit einander wie die zwen bossen in der Figur mit dem H gegen der Lincken anzeigen. (...)</p>	<p>Zwerch Do the Zwerch this way: In the “zufechten” [entering] go in the zorn-guard at your right (as in the chapter before). Set your left foot forwards, keep your sword on the right shoulder, as if you want to execute a zornhau. When your opponent then cuts you from the roof or from above, cut at the same time from below over-zwerch against his cut, keep your hilt high above your head, that you parry [=protect] your head, and in the same time with the cut make a good step to his left side. Doing this you parry [“set aside”] and hit at the same time as shown by the two persons in the picture H on the left.</p>



Fig. 8: Zwerch depicted by MEYER 1570, detail

Interpretation: Meyer explicitly describes to perform the Zwerch “indes” – simultaneously to the opponents attack – and coming from below.

This might be caused by the circumstance, that it is more difficult to counter this with a counter-twer below, when the primary attack already comes from below.

2.4 Schielhau

The historical descriptions of the Schielhaus are quite clear (“*schielen*” – “to be cross-eyed”, “to squint”, also “to peer”; while cross-eyed seems to be a good description for the twisted grip). The level of your hilt – as always – depends on the level of the opponents weapon.

2.4.1 Schielhau against Oberhau (in the Nach) – two historical interpretations:

The footwork is the same as with the zornhau, but for the blade movement there are two slightly different versions to be found in the fightbooks:

a) Ringecks gloss, who advises us to cut in the weak of the blade and attack his right shoulder. This requires more to push the opponents blade to the side and working from the bind. This version works best against an oberhau into a lower hanging position.

RINGECK 1440, fol. 31r-v	
<i>Schiller ein bricht waß bufler schlecht order stycht / Wer wech sel trawet schiller In dar vß beraubet Glosa Hie merck Der schiller ist ain haw der dem buffeln die sich maysterschafft an nemmen mit gwalt In bricht In hawen vnd stechen vnd den haw tryb also Wan er dir oben ein hawet [31v] von siner rechter sytter So haw och von dener rechter sytten mit der kurtzen schnyden mit vff gerechten armen ge sinen hawe In die schwach sinenes schwerts vnd schlag In vff sinen rechten achsel (...)</i>	The Schielhau breaks what is cut or pierced by the buffalo, who wants to perform “durchwecheln” [to change through below] is threatened by the schielhau. Gloss: The schielhau is a cut which breaks in the cuts and thrusts of the buffaloes, who want to take mastership with force. Do it this way: When he cuts you from above from his right side, so cut also from your right side with the short edge and high reaching arms against his cut in the weak of his blade and hit the right [!] shoulder. (...)

b) Danzig et al., who recommend to cut over the sword. This movement uses the principle of “over running” the opponents blade without- or only from a short bind (and yes, it is almost the same technique as the krump against ox in the Zabinski-interpretation). This is still the same in Meyers book.

DANZIG 1452, fol. 23r
<i>... So ver wennt dein swert vnd haw gegen seinem haw mit der kurtzen schneid lanck aus gerackten armen ober vber sein swert Im zu° dem kopff ...</i>
<i>... So turn your sword and cut with the short edge from long reaching arms over his sword to his head ...</i>

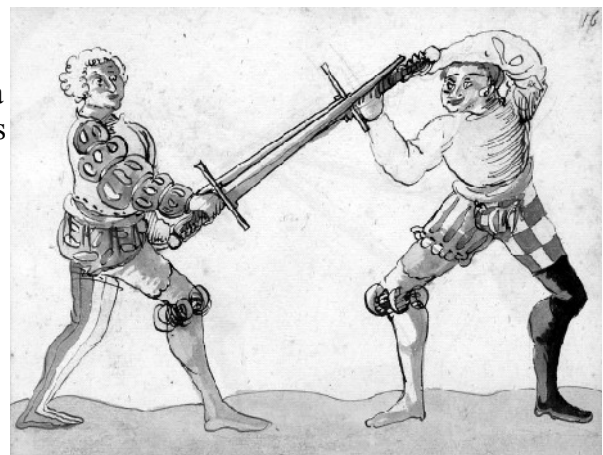


Fig. 9: The right figure executes the “schilcher” over the sword against an oberhau with a deep hilt in the WILHALM 1523

2.4.2 Schielhau against longort (in the “Vor”)

The glosses from the mid 15th century onwards deliver two variations on how to break langort (and mostly also “Pflug”) with the schielhau.

a) staring to the ort and attacking the throat:

DANZIG 1452, fol. 24v	
<i>... vnd helt dir den langen ort gegen dem gesicht oder der prust So halt dein swert an der rechten achsel vnd schil mit dem gesicht zu° dem ort vnd thu°e als dw ym dar zu° hauen wöllest vnd haw starck mit dem schilär mit der kurtzen schneid an sein swert vñ scheus ym den ort do mit lanck ein ze dem hals mit einem zw° tritt des rechten füess ...</i>	When he holds the longort against your face or breast, hold your sword on your right shoulder and peer with your eyes to the ort and pretend that you want to cut him there. Then cut strong with the schielhau with the short edge to his sword and shoot your ort long towards his throat with a step forwards with the right foot. ...

Note that this is a description of a mastercut, supposedly executed with no stepping in the first movement (as in the alternative zornhau-interpretation above).

b) staring to the head and attacking the hands:

DANZIG 1452, fol. 24v	
<i>... wenn er gegen dir stet in dem langen ort So schil ym mit dem gesicht zw° dem haubt vnd thu°e als du in dar auff wöllest schlachen vnd schlach in auß dem schilhaw mit dem ort auff sein hend ...</i>	When he stands against you in the “langort”, peer to his face or head, and pretend that you want to cut him there. Then cut with the schielhau on his hands...

2.5 Schaitler

The interpretation of the schaitler seems theoretically clear but in practice, there are gradually different reconstructions to be found.

SPEYER 1491, fol. 28r	
<i>Itm den schittler tribe also wan du mit dem zu vechten zu ym chompst legt er sich in die hutt alber so setz den lincken fus fur vnd halt din schwertt mit vß gestreckten armen hoch vber din haupt yn der hut vom tag vnd spring zu Im mit dem rechtn fus vnd hau mit der langen schniden starck von oben nider vnd pleyb mit den armen hoch vnd senck im den ort vnter sich zu sinem gesicht oder Brust (...)</i>	Execute the schaitler when you enter in the “zufechten” and he reclines himself in the guard “alber”. Set your left foot forwards and hold your sword with elongated arms high above your head in the guard “vom tag” and jump towards him with the right foot and cut with the long edge strong down, and keep the arms high and lower the ort downwards to his face or breast (...)

Interpretation: The “schaitler” is basically a vertical oberhau executed against the guard “alber” with a pressing forward step. Its particular execution is done with high hands and hilt, the ort downwards, to overrun the upcoming defence: the guard “kron”.

The variations of modern reconstructions refer mainly to the level of the hilt, varying from sword and arms almost horizontal on shoulder level to a high bow-like end-position. Fact is: the higher the hilt, the weaker the hit and the shorter the range, but the safer the attack. In the end, I think, as always everything depends on the swordplay of the opponent: Make your “schaitler” as low and straight as possible and as high as necessary.

(Explanatory note: in the earlier fightbooks the “schaitler” is solely described as an attack in the “Vor” against “Alber”. On the Ochs-DVD from Hans Heim and Alex Kiermayer a “Nach”-version is shown: A simple oberhau with a step back is executed against a drawn through oberhau on the front leg. There's no need to level up the hands to high, they are not threatened. This technique is called “Nachreisen” until Meyer, who names it “Scheitelhauw” (MEYER 1570, fol. 20v)).



Fig. 10: "Nachreisen" in the GOLIATH 1510-20

3. Supplement

Credits:

The pictures used in this script are picture quotations (“Bildzitate”) after German law, the used online-resources are delivered in the reference list below.

Most of the transcriptions come from Dierk Hagedorn (www.hammaborg.de and HAGEDORN 2008), I dared to simplify them a little for better reading. The transcription of MEYER 1570 comes from Alex Kiermayer, the ones of WALLERSTEIN 1450-70 and GOLIATH 1510-20 from Grzegorz Zabinski, from whom the the translation of the last was also taken. The other draft-translations were done by myself.

The Liechtenauer-glossar “Wiktenauer” from on the homepage of the “Schwertler” is not directly cited, but was an important help (<http://www.schwerteln.de/wiki/pmwiki.php?n=Glossar.Glossar>).

Last but not least: Thanks to everyone who helped me in any way, especially my fellow training-partners and students for asking all that inconvenient questions and to my wife Susanne, who made the inevitable corrections of my horrible Genglish.

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