



Advice on the Dussack Devices

The following is from Joachim Meyer's 1570 works, Chapter 7 of the Dussack:

Now Follow the Postures along with the Devices "Now that I have taught all necessary elements pertaining to this weapon, I will proceed to explain the postures along with their devices. And you shall well note here (as I have also said previously) that the postures must be understood not merely as a position in which to wait for the opponents fighting, but much more as a beginning or end of the cuts and parrying. So for example when you are standing in the Bow, if you will now strike out of the Bow, then in gathering for the cut you come up into the Watch or Steer; and when you pull your Dussack around your head for the stroke, then in pulling around you come through the Wrath Cut, from there the cut is first completed; then when you have completed this high cut, if you do not go through to the side with the cut, you come at the end of it into the Change, if you parry up from there, then you come into the Bow, or into the Longpoint.

And note that the body postures are named for the shapes they assume in pulling around or gathering for a cut, as the Wrath Cut from its wrathful attitude, the Steer from its Thrust, and the Boar because it cuts from the side like a Boar.

Now this is the Chiefest reason for the invention of these postures, that when you pull up into a posture for a cut, you can change it while you are still in the air, and turn or send it to another opening; also when you pull up for a cut, that at the furthest point into which you come with pulling up, you can tarry an instant to see whether he will cut at your opening as you cut, so that you may perceive in the air whether you can reach him over his incoming cut by cutting simultaneously over it. Nonetheless you shall tarry no longer in any posture than as long as it takes to gather for the stroke. but always change off from one posture into another, until you perceive opportunity to cut. Also you shall fully fix in your mind the devices that are appointed for every posture, practice them, and make them familiar to you. so that you come into a posture in the middle of the fight, you are ready and prepared with counterdevices.

Further you shall know that although I have assigned to every posture its particular devices, it is not my intention that these devices shall not be executed or take place from other postures. The chiefest reason that I have assigned some devices to one posture, others to another, is so they can be discussed in an orderly fashion. Also these devices are not so set in stone that they cannot be changed in practice-they are merely examples from which everyone may seek, derive, and learn devices according to his opportunity and may arrange and change them as suits him. For as we are not all of a single Nature, so we also cannot all have a single style in combat; yet all must nonetheless arise and be derived from a single basis."

Joachim Meyer 1570

This is a very revealing bit of info by Joachim Meyer. He speaks to the Zufechten, or the onset of the engagement. And reminds us to continuously move from Guard to Guard, tarrying only so long as necessary to perceive the opponents intentions, as well as being able to strike from the transition, in between, the Guard changes. The Plates of Joachim Meyer support this by their very Nature, that of movement or transition. With his Plates, he is showing us that His is an Art that requires constant movement. With the Dussack in particular, it is the basis from which you launch the Provoker Taker, Hitter, techniques, and many others. If the opponent stays in a particular Guard, its all the better for the fencer who is changing from Guard to Guard, with footwork that effectively moves you to a better position to exploit the opponents' static waiting to defend. Having a prepared series of Counterstrikes that are executed immediately after your initial first strike, seems easier said than done! He says that it is not easy or quick to know what your opponent will do just then, but by having many many devices, that contain these series of Strikes /Counterstrikes, you will be ready!

He states, " Therefore I always hold with the one who knows many devices and few counters, and how to execute them judiciously in the Before and After, and allows his opponent to concern himself about the counters, and is so prepared with devices, that when one is countered against him, he will have two other fine ones upon the spot, in the middle of the work." I think he's telling us something important here about his own style and about that which we are attempting to reconstruct.

The Devices are an essential part of the fighting system of Joachim Meyer, he reiterates above that they must be "fully fixed" in our minds. This is an effective way to learn the numerous strikes . And he says Practice them! thats what he's telling us to Practice, and he tells us why. That the accumulation of all the Devices will provide you with the ability to be ready and prepared with counterdevices. Also that these devices should basically be taken and learned then done with as you see fit. In the context of a fight, the ability to react more effectively than the opponent is facilitated by these Devices.

Committing to muscle memory these strikes and counter strikes, definetly enables you to have at your disposal many attacks from various and different angles. And any device can be used with any Guard. Meister Meyer purposely tells us this, and is further evidence of his desire for us to take this Art and make it our own.

The fact that Meister Meyer only presents a common counter, in the Dussack, is telling. He says the most effective way to counter someones attack is to go under his cuts with strong parrying, and hold them off so he can't come through with them, then turn your long edge to the side your opponent is striking you, and when your Dussacks knock together, immediatly thrust at his face, or into LangerOrt. Long Point, regardless of where his Dussack goes from yours. He says this is a Summary, and he instructs us to well heed and observe this precept in hitting, so you can easily counter everyone. Also that if the opponent will not cut at you, you must Thrust Straight from the Longpoint at his Face, when he strikes out your thrust, cut in at him from the side he just struck from, Sound familiar? Longsword Mutieren. He discusses this several times throughout his entire Works, The Dussack is full of the practice of Dempfen or Suppressing, Holding Off, etc. These are just a few examples of some of what Meister Meyer intends for us to Learn and know.

The beauty of the Dussack lies in its short stature and ability to deceive quicker, more effeciently. Close in fighting is a requirement, committment to the attack with both stepping and body and head leaning is essential. Meister Meyer has provided us with much explanation of the Devices or attacks but only few details of the Counters. this is because he advocates the attack, and includes far more advice on them than anything. And not only the attack in the Before, but the After is equally as important an aspect of these techniques. He does not overlook the Abzug by any means, but rather, includes it everywhere, importantly in many, many devices. Its clear we must Learn and Know these devices.

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