

Guards



¹ Codex Danzig (Codex 44.A.8) folio 1v; recital by Johannes Liechtenauer

Liechtenauer Lineage

Peter von Danzig

Pflug² - Plow

Center of mass is low, blade in the middle, false edge up, handle is slightly to the side. The tip of the blade is at eye level. Both sides can lead the Pflug.



Ochs - Ox

Hilt and blade are at forehead level, the tip should face towards the opponent's throat or somewhat downwards. This stance can be used both sides. Crossguard is on a diagonal angle. This position is easiest to achieve by executing an upward diagonal cut.

Vom Tag³ - „From the roof”

The blade is held up over the shoulder or in some cases even the head. The angle should be around 45°, and the sword should not rest on the shoulder.

This stance - by nature - is on the right side.



Alber - Fool

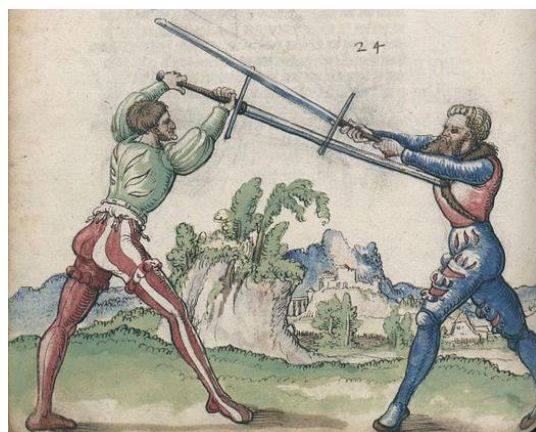
The tip is lowered, facing downwards, the sword is held in the middle, with the false edge on top. Either side can lead.

Pseudo-Peter von Danzig⁴

Kron⁵ - Krone or Crown

Referred mostly as left sided Ochs. Both hands are above the head, the tip should point towards the opponent throat.

Hilt is held slightly ahead.



² Codex Danzig (Codex 44.A.8) folio 1v

³ Codex Danzig (Codex 44.A.8) folio 2r

⁴ Anonymous german fencing master 14-15th century. Possibly Jud Lew or Sigmund ain Ringeck.

⁵ Codex Goliath, MS Germ.Quart.2020, 38r

Hans Talhoffer

Wechsel ⁶ (right figure) – Changing

Right leg in front, sword is out on the left side, pointing downwards. False edge is looking towards the opponent.

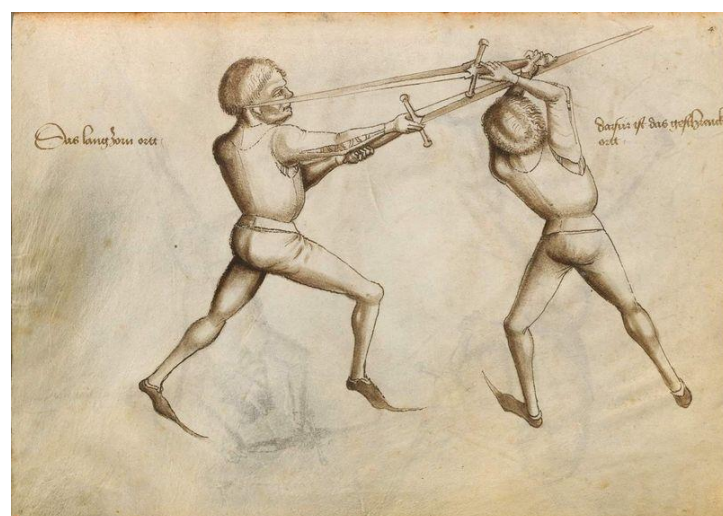


Lang zorn ort (left figure) – Long wrath stance

The stance after a finished Zornhaw.

Geschrenckt ort ⁷ (right figure) – Crossed point / Thwart

Also known as Ochs. The words is held up, pointing towards the opponent. This stance is on the right, thus – hence the name – hands are crossed.

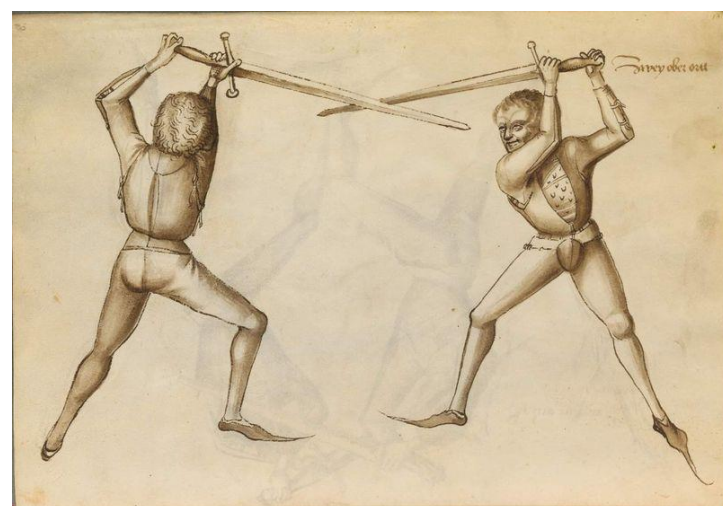


Ober ort ⁸(both figures)

Variation for Krone / left sided Ochs. Hilt is slightly behind, the crossguard is above. The tip is pointing towards the opponent's throat.

It can also be seen that the left figure is holding his thumb on his blade, which is usually for executing one of the master cuts.

Note that Ober ort / Oberort can refer to any other upper stances.



⁶ Hans Talhoffer, Cod. icon. 394a, folio 2v

⁷ Hans Talhoffer, Cod. icon. 394a, folio 3v

⁸ Hans Talhoffer, Cod. icon. 394a, folio 8r

Ysm Port (right figure) – Iron gate⁹

Similarly to Alber, the blade is pointed downwards, but also outward on the right side. Note that the false edge is on the front, hence the right arm is on top.



Joachim Meyer¹⁰

Ochs (left figure) - Ox

Just as above; Hilt and blade are at forehead level, the tip should face towards the opponent's throat or somewhat downwards. This stance can be used both sides. Crossguard is on a diagonal angle.

This is position is easiest to achieve by executing an upward diagonal cut.

Pflug (right figure) - Plow

As it was mentioned above; Center of mass is low, blade in the middle, false edge up, handle is slightly to the side. The tip of the blade is at eye level. Both sides can lead the Pflug.



Vom Tag (left figure) – „From the roof”

As above; The blade is held up over the shoulder or in some cases even the head. The angle should be around 45°, and the sword should not rest on the shoulder.

This stance - by nature - is on the right side.

Alber - Fool

As above; The tip is lowered, facing downwards, the sword is held in the middle, with the false edge on top. Either side can lead.



⁹ Hans Talhoffer, Cod. icon. 394a, folio 9v

¹⁰ Pictures are from Joachim Meyer's "Gründtliche Beschreibung der Kunst des Fechtens"; B and C

Zornhut – Wrath stance

Leaning backwards, the sword is somewhat resting on the shoulder. From this guard, one can initiate a Zornhaw.

Eynhorn - Unicorn

Variation for Ochs. In this case, the tip of the blade is pointed upwards, above the opponent. Legs aren't spread; one should stand on a line.



Langort – Long stance¹¹

Variation for Pflug; The fencer takes up a higher stance than Pflug, and reaches out with the sword. The blade is in the middle, arms are almost completely stretched out.



Wechsel – Change

Right leg in front, sword is out on the left side, pointing downwards. False edge is looking towards the opponent.

Schlüssel - Key

Variation of Ochs; Here, the sword rests on the left hand, the crossguard is almost behind the plane of the face. The blade points towards the opponent.



¹¹ Pictures are from Joachim Meyer's "Gründtliche Beschreibung der Kunst des Fechtens"; A & D

Hangetort¹² – Hanging point

Unlike the Ochs or Kron, the sword looks downward and not at the opponent.



Further mentioned, but without illustrations:

- Neben hut – Near ward, back guard or tail guard
 - The sword is behind the wielder, somewhat pointing down. Both sides can lead. In case left leg is in front, the long/real edge of the blade is looking towards the opponent. By executing a rising diagonal cut, the fencer will arrive in an Ochs on the left side. Otherwise – if the right leg is in front – the hands are crossed, and the false edge is towards the opponent. By cutting upwards, the wielder will arrive in Ochs or Vom Tag.
- Eysen port – Iron gate
 - Joachim Meyer points out, that the Iron gate in his era is mostly used by the Italian schools. By having the right leg in front, the fencer should hold the hilt in front of the knee, facing towards the opponent. Although the tip is looking downwards and out, the sword stays in front of the wielder, like an iron gate that protects.

Note about the Liechtenauer lineage:

By the original teachings of Johannes Liechtenauer, there are 4 primary guards, or basic stances, which are: Pflug, Vom Tag, Ochs and Alber. All other guards and stances are secondary.

¹² From Joachim Meyer's "Gründtliche Beschreibung der Kunst des Fechtens"; F

Fiore lineage

Fiore dei Liberi

¹³¹⁴Posta di donna –
Stance of the Queen /
Post of the Lady

As the Zornort; Leaning backwards, the sword is somewhat resting on the shoulder. From this guard, one can initiate a Zornhaw.

As it can see on the figure on the right, Posta di Donna can lead on both sides.



15

Posta di fenestra – Stance of the (True) Window
or Window Guard

As it is an Ochs – see above; Hilt and blade are at forehead level, the tip should face towards the opponent's throat or somewhat downwards. This stance can be used both sides. Crossguard is on a diagonal angle.

This is position is easiest to achieve by executing an upward diagonal cut.



16

Mezzana porta di ferro – Middle Iron Gate

German schools refer to it as the Fool stance, the Alber; The tip is lowered, facing downwards, the sword is held in the middle, with the false edge on top. Either side can lead.



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- 13 Fior di Battaglia (MS Ludwig XV 13) 23v-d
 - 14 Flos Duellatorum (Pisani-Dossi MS) 19a-b
 - 15 Flos Duellatorum (Pisani-Dossi MS) 18a-c
 - 16 Flos Duellatorum (Pisani-Dossi MS) 18a-d

¹⁷Posta longa – Long stance

Also known as Langort in the German schools; Variation for Pflug. The fencer takes up a higher stance than Plow, and reaches out with the sword. The blade is in the middle, arms are almost completely stretched out.



¹⁸Corona – Crown

Unlike the Liechtenauer lineage, Crow is the guard, where the sword is held up at face level, and it is turned, so the crossguard is parallel with the shoulders. Tip is pointing upwards.



¹⁹Dente di cenghiaro stabile – Wild Boar's Turk

Variation for mezzana porta di ferro (middle iron gate). The sword is drawn back and upwards, near to the wielder.



¹⁷ Flos Duellatorum (Pisani-Dossi MS) 18b-a

¹⁸ Flos Duellatorum (Pisani-Dossi MS) 18b-b

¹⁹ Flos Duellatorum (Pisani-Dossi MS) 18b-d

²⁰Porta breve – Short stance

Variation for Porta longa; mostly applied in armored combat. The sword is held near to the body, can be lead on both sides.



²¹Posta de coda lunga – Long tail, Back guard

Also known as Nebenhut in German schools; The sword is behind the wielder, somewhat pointing down. Both sides can lead. In case left leg is in front, the long/real edge of the blade is looking towards the opponent.

By executing a rising diagonal cut, the fencer will arrive in an Posta di fenestra on the left side. Otherwise – if the right leg is in front – the hands are crossed, and the false edge is towards the opponent. By cutting upwards, the wielder will arrive in Posta di fenestra.



²⁰ Flos Duellatorum (Pisani-Dossi MS) 19a-a

²¹ Flos Duellatorum (Pisani-Dossi MS) 19a-c