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Fighting with the grain sickle

Chapter G7 of De Arte Athletica by Paulus Hector Mair
BSB Cod.icon. 393(1)

English translation of the latin text made by Reinier van Noort
and Saskia Roselaar of De Orde der Noorderwind
(www.noorderwind.org).

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About this translation.

Paulus Hector Mair's *De Arte Athletica* is a large two-part manuscript that is dated to the middle of the 16th century and held in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (BSB Cod.icon. 393(1/2)). It contains a large number of colourful images showing fighting techniques with a wide variety of conventional weapons, and some unconventional weapons. Scans of the entire manuscript can be found here: <http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/~db/bsb00006570/images/>. Whereas BSB Cod.icon. 393 is written in Latin, a similar manuscript with German text (Mscr. Dresd. C 93/94) and one with both Latin and German (Codex Vindobensis 10825/26) text are also preserved. In these books, the Latin texts are most likely translations of the German texts. One of the unconventional weapons for which fighting techniques are shown in Paulus Hector Mair's manuscripts is the sickle, on which 16 illustrated pages are included in each manuscript. Each page contains an image and a description of a series of attacks and counters, ending with one of the fighters being injured.

This document contains a translation of the sickle section contained within pages 226r-233v of BSB Cod.icon. 393(1), made by Saskia Roselaar and Reinier van Noort of De Orde der Noorderwind (www.noorderwind.org). Note that a translation into Dutch was first made of the Latin text (which is already a translation of the original German). Subsequently, the Dutch translation was translated into English. Then, a final consistency check was made between the English translation and the original Latin to assure an accurate translation. Where the Latin text was unclear or ambiguous, a transcription of the often clearer German text of Codex Vindobensis 10825 was used for clarification.

The result, we think, is an accurate English translation of the Latin text. If you have any questions or comments, however, feel free to contact Reinier van Noort via Reinier@bruchius.com.

Greetings,

Reinier van Noort, Saskia Roselaar and Youval Kuipers

1 A cut from above with the grain sickle from both sides



If you both approach each other, and hold the sickle correctly, if you put your right foot in front and hold the sickle in the right hand next to the left side of your head, and stretch the opened left hand towards your opponent, and from there follow with the left [foot], you cut his head from his right side. But if the opponent turns at you in the same way, [while you are] standing with the left foot in front, holding the sickle in the right hand, holding [it] next to the head down at the left shoulder, with [litt: put] the left on the right [hand], then deflect with your sickle your opponent to your right side. Then, if you have grabbed the right [hand] of the opponent with the left hand, you wound his head on the right side. But if the opponent comes at you in the same way from above, if you quickly grab his right [hand], you can in this way turn away his cuts. And from there, you can immediately, if you pull the right [hand], try to cut the left leg of the opponent standing in front. But if he tries the same, then push the right elbow of the opponent more inwards with your left hand, if you then pull back the right hand, you can hit his head with the point of the sickle and pull back again.

2 A low and a high cut



In mutual battle, if like an athlete you prepare yourself for the fight, you will put your right foot in front, and opposite the opponent hold the sickle with the right hand, but hide the left arm under the right arm, and if from there you make a pass with the left foot [litt: pull back the left foot], you will by cutting from the low position stop the right arm of the opponent. But if in the same way you place your right foot opposite him, and hold the sickle with the right hand in the manner of the high cut, and the left under the right arm, then you will displace his attempt to your left side with your sickle, and meanwhile, after you have with the left hand grabbed the right hand of the opponent, from the left side of your opponent cut his neck with the sickle. But if he comes at you in the same way from above, you will again grab his right hand with your left hand, and if he makes an attempt, displace this to your left side, and hit his left arm with the sickle, and from there again pull backwards. But if the opponent pulls back, you will with two steps press on to threaten the opponent and cut his head.

3 A cut against a way of pulling by the opponent



In this fight, when you come closer to the opponent, you will stretch your right arm, and with the right hand hold the sickle opposite him, but hold the left [hand] on the left hip, and then, after you have followed with the left foot, you will hit the head of the opponent with the sickle. But if he comes at you in the same manner, [while you are] standing with the right foot in front, and if you hold the sickle against the opponent with the right hand and in the same manner hold the left hip with the left hand, you will displace his attempt to your right side. If from there you connect the sickle with his right arm, you will quickly pull him towards you. But if he wants to pull you towards him in the same way, if then with the left hand you grab his right, and to your right side displace the attempt of the opponent, hit his head immediately on the left side and from there pull back. But if the opponent likewise pulls back again, you will threaten him sharply by following him, and hitting the right hand of the opponent with the sickle.

4 A cut from above and one from below



In this manner, you can adapt to the opponent, when you stand up straight with both legs together, and with the right hand hold the sickle high, with a straight arm, next to the head, but place your left hand in the same way on the left hip, and if from there you step in with the right leg, you will hit the head of the opponent with the sickle. But if he takes the same position against you, [you] standing with the right leg in front, and with the sickle in the right hand next to the leg that stands in front, and the left hand in the same manner on the left hip, you will with a raised sickle displace his strike to your right side. If from there you follow with the left, you will hit the right leg of the opponent standing in front. But if it happens that he, from the low strike hits you in the same manner, you will with your left hand grab his right elbow from the outside, pull it towards you, and if you place the sickle on the right shoulder of he opponent, you will put him down by cutting.

5 Two cuts that hit the arms



To the aforementioned manner, you can adapt in this way: if you remember to place the right foot in front and to hold the sickle against the opponent with the right hand, if you connect the left [hand] with the left hip, you can then cut his right arm with the sickle. But if he approaches you in the same way, while you hold your right foot in front and against the enemy hold the sickle with the right, then place your left arm onto his right arm from the the front, and displace the cut of the opponent towards the left side: if you grab the aforementioned hand strongly, from there you will wound his right arm with the sickle. But if he uses this, then with the left hand grab the right of the opponent, make a pass inwards with the left foot, and if you lift his right above the [German: his] head, and immediately pull back your right again, you will hit his groin with the sickle. But if the opponent also uses this, bring the left hand up over his own right arm [German: grab with your left hand from below outside over his right arm], and if you then in that manner pull him hard towards you, you can break the opponent's arm, and from there cut his neck and pull back again from the opponent.

6 The double cut against the double parry



In the mutual battle of this fight, when you yourself reach the opponent, then put your left foot in front, and hold the sickle high with the right hand opposite the opponent, and cut his neck from the right side. But if he in the same manner comes at you from above, [while you are] standing with the right [foot] in front, then hold the sickle against the opponent in the manner of the low cut, and block his right arm with the left hand, and after you have lifted this high, you will cut his right arm next to the armpit with the sickle. But if he attempts the same, after with the left hand you have grabbed the opponent's right and have lifted this, you will displace his cut in this manner. But if you from there immediately retract the right, you will try to cut the right foot of the opponent [which is] placed in front. But if the opponent in the same manner uses this, then grab his right hand with your left, and in this manner displace his attempt, and if you then pull back the right hand immediately, you will wound the neck of the opponent with a cut, and pull back from him again.

7 A high and a low cut and their parry



If you both approach each other, then put your left leg in front, and hold the sickle high with the right hand against the opponent, and from there cut his head. But if he in turn attempts to injure you from above, then again put your left leg in front, and hold your sickle against the opponent in the cut from below, then you will hinder his right arm from the front with the left hand, and if you then lift this, you can displace the high attack of the opponent. And from there you can injure the knee of the opponent's left leg, [which is] placed in front. But if the opponent in the same manner hinders you from below, you can hinder his right elbow from the inside with the opposed left hand, and if you then displace him strongly, you will displace his cut, and if you then quickly again pull the right hand towards yourself, and attack the right arm of the opponent by cutting, you will from there pull back from him again.

8 Two cuts against their parry



In this manner you will behave in a mutual fight: remember to place your left leg in front and to hold the sickle high with the right hand opposite the opponent, and you will hit part of his neck or his left side. But if the opponent in the same manner attempts to cut, you, standing with the right foot in front against him, will then hinder the right hand of the opponent with your left hand, and if you then lift it high, you will in that manner displace the enemy cut. And from there you will not omit to hit the left side of the neck of the opponent with the sickle. But if he will come at you from above, you will with the left hand hinder his right elbow from the inside, and if you pull that back hard towards your left side, and so displace the opponent with force, if you then immediately follow up with right towards the inside, for him towards the left side, and immediately pull your right hand towards you, you will cut the left side of the enemy body with the sickle, and from there make sure that you pull back from the opponent safely.

9 A different manner for the above form



To the aforementioned manner in a mutual fight you can adapt as follows: put the right foot in front, and hold the sickle with the right hand high from the right side, and connect the left [hand] with the left hip, and follow the placing of your body to the left, then cut with the sickle in the left side of the neck of the opponent. But if the opponent has come at you in the same manner, then place the right foot in front against him, and hold the sickle high with the right hand, and connect the left [hand] with the left hip, then direct the left hand from below upwards and you will block his right arm next to his shoulder, and if from there you pull him towards you as hard as you can, you will displace his cut and in the meantime cut the head of the opponent. But if he in turn tries to hit your head, then grab his right hand with force with the left hand, and if you displace that to the left side, you will deflect the cut of the opponent. And if you have finished this situation, then quickly reach with the sickle to his right leg, [which is] placed in front, and from there pull back.

10 A cut from above against a way to parry



To this technique you will adapt in the following way: put the left foot in front and hold the sickle opposite the opponent with the right hand, and you will cut his neck from the right side. But if he attempts (to hit) you in the same manner, [while you are] standing with he left foot in front, you will again lift the sickle with the right hand, and with the centre of the sickle block his attempt, and immediately after that with the left hand attack his right elbow by pushing against it, and then lifting him strongly upward: and if you then suddenly pull the right [hand] towards you, after you have followed with the right foot, you will cut the neck of the opponent from the right side. But if the opponent attempts the same against you, you will with the left hand grab his right on the inside, and if you lift it, you will deflect the opponent's idea against you. But if you are deflected in the same way by the opponent, you will immediately attempt to cut his left foot, [which is] placed in front, and when you pull him towards you by pulling, it is possible to injure him by cutting, or to throw him.

11 Two cuts on the outside



In the fight you will act in this manner: put your right leg in front, and hold the sickle with the right hand opposite the opponent, but put your left against your left hip, and from this position you cut the enemy's neck from outside on the right side with the sickle. But if he uses this against you, [while you are] standing with the left foot in front, and are also holding the sickle in the right hand opposite the opponent, then grab the right elbow of the opponent with the left hand from the outside, and if you sharply displace that towards your right side, you will deflect the cut of the opponent, and from there you will make sure that you cut his right elbow from the outside with the sickle. But if the opponent attempts the same against you, you will not neglect to grab the right arm of the opponent with left hand and in that way displace his cut. And from there you will with force attempt to cut the left leg of the opponent, [which is] placed in front, after pulling back the right [hand] towards you. But if he has come at you in the same way, you will displace him with force with the left hand against his right arm. But if the opponent displaces you in the same way, you will suddenly pull back your right, and if from there you injure his head by cutting, pull back from him again.

12 A cut from above against one that attacks the side



In this fight, when you arrive at the opponent, you will remember to place your right foot in front, and if you hold the sickle high with the right hand against the opponent, you will hit his head. But if the opponent acts against you in the same manner [while you are] standing with the right foot in front, and you in turn are holding the sickle in the right hand in the manner of the middle cut, then with the left hand grab the right arm of the opponent at the front, next to the hand, and if you lift him upwards in that way, you will displace the cut from above. And quickly you will wound the right side of the opponent with the sickle. But if you understand that he attacks you in the same manner, then with the left hand hinder the right elbow of the opponent from the outside, and if you push the opponent strongly away towards your right side, you will deceive his middle cut, and meanwhile follow with the left foot and hit his right leg, [which is] placed in front, and from there again pull back from the opponent.

13 Two cuts with their applied parry



You will adapt to the opponent from this fight in this way, that you put your right foot in front and hold the sickle with a stretched arm against the opponent, and you will make sure that you cut his head with force. And if he in his turn attempts to wound you, then you [standing] opposite him with the right leg in front, and the sickle held in the right hand in the manner of the cut from above, cover the right elbow of the opponent with the left hand from the outside, and if you then lift this, you will lift away his cut from above. Meanwhile you will cut the right arm of the opponent from above next to the hand. But if he attempts to injure you in the same manner, you will place your left hand on the chest of the opponent between both his arms, from the right side, and in this manner you will push him away, and from his cut you will safely release yourself. But meanwhile, after you have pulled towards you with your right hand, you will cut the right arm of the opponent, and from there pull back from him again.

14 Two cuts from below



In this fight, if you stand straight with both legs in the same place, and with the right hand hold the sickle at the right side, but at the same time grab it with you're the left [hand] and place the right against the right hip, and then place the left foot in front next to the left foot of the opponent, on the outside, and if you cut to his left foot, [which is] placed in front, you will in this manner pull the opponent towards you. But if he uses this against you, you will block the left shoulder of the opponent with the left hand, and if you pull the opponent down towards your left side, you will deflect his cut. But if meanwhile you throw the sickle between his legs in his genitals, and from there you pull him towards you, it will be possible in that manner to throw the opponent over the left leg, [which is] placed in front.

15 Two middle cuts by which a way is formed to throw the enemy



If it will be necessary to adapt to this action in this manner, you will put your right foot in front, and hold the sickle with the right hand, in front of your face opposite the opponent, but also place the left [hand] against the left hip. Meanwhile you will place the left foot outside behind the right of the opponent, and in the manner of a cut from his right side connect the sickle around the loin to hit. But if he attacks you in approximately the same manner, you in your turn will use the learned method [a cut around the loin from the right], and pull the opponent towards you from there. But if he in his turn connects his sickle with your loin, you will with the left hand hinder his elbow on the inside, and displace the attack of the opponent to your left side. Further, if you in turn are displaced by him in the same manner, if you have grabbed his chin with the left hand, you will lift this up. But if the opponent attempts to turn this against you, you will immediately attack with the sickle, and pretend to want to attack the opponent from above to cut, but to deflect you will cut his left arm and in this manner you will free yourself, so that he cannot grab your chin. But if you understand that the opponent wants to do the same against you, then throw the sickle away, and throw your left hand from above against his neck, and put the right on his genital, and if in this manner you will lift up the opponent, you will throw him down on your left side.

16 A way to throw the enemy on the ground by lifting him



If you want to use this action in an athletic manner, you have to place your right foot opposite the opponent, and hold the sickle opposite the opponent with the right hand in the manner of the cut from below, but place the left against the left hip, and if from there you move forward to the inside with left, you will place the sickle against his right arm to cut. But if he in the same manner uses the middle cut against you, you will again place the right foot in front, and with the middle of the sickle deflect his attack to your right side. But if you are in the same manner deflected by the opponent, you will place your left hand against his right elbow from the outside, and from there put him away towards your right side. But if he in his turn puts you away, you will direct your sickle around his loin from his right side in the manner of a cut. Further, if the opponent attempts it in the same manner against you, you will throw away your sickle, and take hold of the side of the opponent's head with the right hand, with the left hand on the left side, and in this manner you will turn the face of the opponent upwards towards the sun and at the same time you can throw him towards your left side.