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Dagger in Codex Wallerstein

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Dijon, May 2003

Codex Wallerstein as a source of seemingly random dagger techniques represents quite a broad range of them, several of which are not present in any other source known to me. I believe it is the only one which names the thrusts with the dagger and which uses the so-called French thrust. There are 14 techniques total, 13 defensive and 1 strictly offensive (describing how to attack the opponent).

Codex relies on feints, instinctive “panic” reactions of the opponent, pressure he gives with his weapon, the way he attacks and his target.

From the spectrum of quite advanced techniques several basics can be extrapolated: grips and stances, attacks and targets, defenses used. A brief analysis of those should hopefully interest the reader in the dagger section of the source.

I would like to thank Marlon Höß-Böttger, Colin Richards, and Robert Kostrzewa for valuable insights, Damien Dyon for showing me what the French thrust can be. And all with whom I worked with in Dijon 2003.

Attacks are made to the nearest opening, and to the foremost extensions of the body. Codex does not target the hands, but always the initial position of the defender dictates where the attack is made - if the right leg is forward, then the strike is aimed at the right side of the body, since it is the closest part. Attacks are made with a simple step or with a passing step.

There are three kinds of attacks in Codex:

1. Stab – dagger held in the “ice-pick” grip, attack made with a downwards move, either from the right diagonal, vertical, left diagonal or even left horizontal. Targets typically include face, shoulders and breast.
2. Italian thrust – typical thrust made from below with a sword grip. Targets usually stomach and breast.
3. French thrust – similar to Italian thrust but made with the long edge up. Has more reach than the Italian one, targets usually breast or face.

Combatants in the Codex use long daggers (roughly about 30-40 cm total length) with edges. Several techniques are possible only with a longer dagger, which is mentioned in the text.

Dagger is held in two ways: a classic “ice-pick” grip, where the dagger is held in a fist like a hammer, with a point downwards, and the so-called “sword” grip, where the dagger is held used like the sword.

There are three basic stances in Codex:

1. Dagger in the ice-pick grip, both hands high, close to the face, either leg forward. This is a very good defensive stance. Variation of left hand low is also possible.
2. Dagger in the ice-pick grip, laid on the right forearm, so the blade is not visible to the opponent. Both hands low. This is a provocative stance and shows the upper openings. Right leg forward.
3. Dagger in the “sword” grip, both hands low, either leg forward. Sometimes the left hand is near the face and protects the upper openings.

Codex Wallerstein utilises a wide range of defenses, both with left hand, and with the dagger hand. It also shows several techniques for using both hands together. The following material has been rearranged, and is grouped by the defenses used:

1. Left hand – used for interception and set-aside. Left-hand interception is the most instinctive defense for protecting one’s face and several techniques make extensive use of this instinctive and sometimes “panic” reaction.
2. Dagger hand – there is a defense made with upturned dagger hand (classic “scissor lock”) and interception of the opponent’s dagger arm on the dagger lying on the forearm.
3. Both hands - upper and lower shield, where the dagger is held in the “sword” grip, and the left hand grabs the blade. Upper shield protects against stabs, lower shield against thrusts.

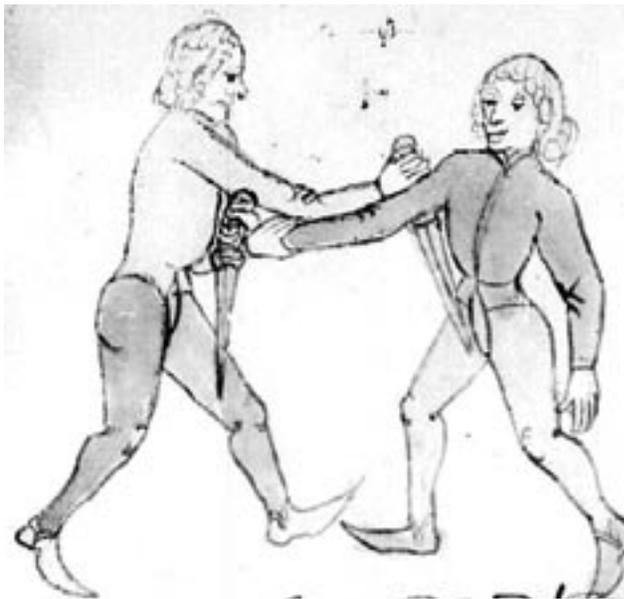


Plate 43. This technique involves catching your opponent's right hand with your left and feinting a stab into his face. If the opponent reacts instinctively and covers his face, you should stab him over his right arm and apply the lock on his right armpit.



Plate 55. This technique again uses the left hand to intercept your opponent's strike, but this time you strike underneath his knee and unbalance him by pushing his hand and pulling your dagger.

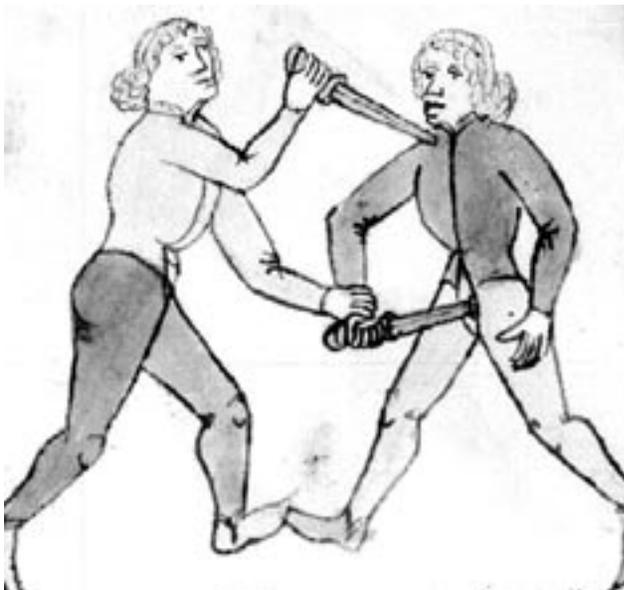


Plate 52. In this technique you should redirect your opponent's stab with your left hand so he stabs himself in the groin, while you can easily stab him in the face.



Plate 56. This is quite complex technique, usable against the opponent armed in a longer dagger. It uses the "French Thrust" You should set aside his attack with the outside of your left hand and then catch his blade, turn it and apply pressure with your own dagger on his wrist.



Plate 51. This is one of the very few (if not the only one) dagger technique which clearly tells you only how to attack your opponent. You should first feint your stab to his face, and if he moves to defend it, turn sideways to him and stab him in his groin.



Plate 44. Here a very interested method of defense is applied. It involves intercepting your opponent's stab with your dagger hand but with your dagger lying along your arm. Then you move to a common elbow lock. Notice the position of attacker's left leg.



Plate 45. This is again the dagger interception as described before. Here you disarm your opponent by turning the point of your dagger over his hand and pulling towards yourself.

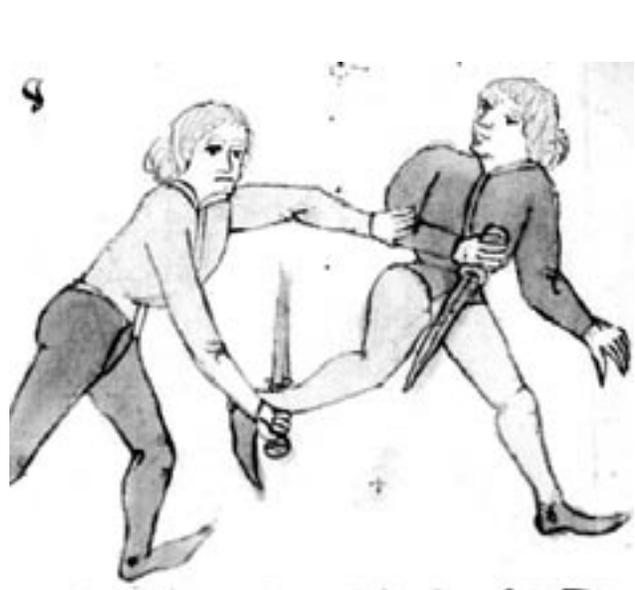


Plate 50. This simple technique involves the dagger interception, elbow push and ankle stab to destabilize and preferably to throw your opponent.



Plate 46. This is a technique commonly known as “the scissors”. The defender intercepts opponent’s stab with upturned dagger hand and immediately goes with his left hand over (or under) his right and applies a strong pressure on the opponent’s wrist. A counter described involves letting go the dagger and grabbing it with the left hand.



Plate 47. This technique is the first to utilize the “upper shield” defense against a stab. Here the defender turns his dagger over the opponent’s forearm which causes the attacker’s weapon to hit his own face.



Plate 48. Again the upper shield, this time the defender pushes his dagger behind the attacker’s neck and drags him to the ground. Very effective with long daggers.



Plate 49. This technique can only be done at speed, and looks very awkward at best. After applying the upper shield, the defender is advised to push his opponent’s arm downwards and thrust over his arm to apply leverage.

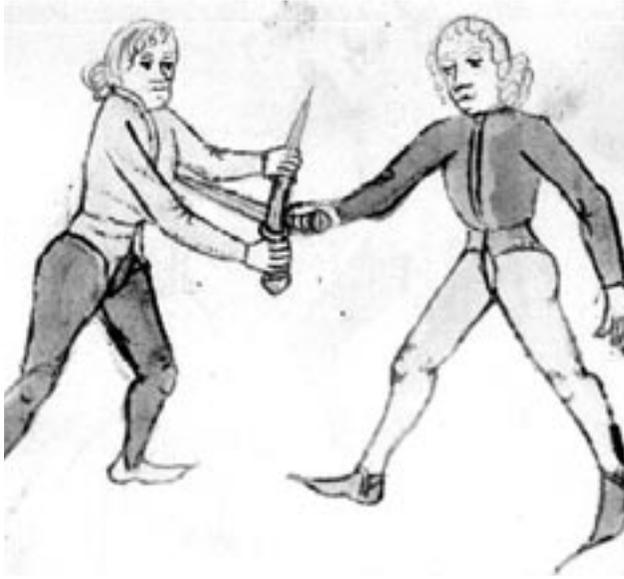


Plate 53. The picture above shows how to apply the lower shield, but the actual text says to go in, and break the opponent's arm over one's shoulder. It is vital to remember to step with the right leg between the opponent's legs.



Plate 54. This technique again works best with long daggers. After defending with the lower shield, one is to turn the point of his dagger below the opponent's wrist and then stab him in the face.