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The Art of Longsword Combat

Book 1



The first of four books covering
a complete training system
by the Academy of European
Medieval Martial Arts

David M. Cvet

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The Art of Longsword Combat Book #1

A student's (recruit) reference manual for the development and training of medieval martial arts focused on longsword with grappling and dagger techniques for the preparation of achieving a scholler rank

Written by

David M. Cvet

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Forward

The purpose of this first book of a four book series is to train the student in the methods, principles and techniques of European Medieval Martial Arts, focusing on dagger, grappling and the longsword. This work was originally created to form the basis of the recruit training program for the Academy of European Medieval Martial Arts or AEMMA. References for this work include but are not limited to historical documents



and treatises such as Fiore dei Liberi, 1410, "Flos Duellatorum", Hans Talhoffer, 1459, "Alte Armatur und Ringkunst", Hans Talhoffer, 1467, "Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre 1467", Jakob Sutor, 1612, "Künfftliches Fechtbuch"

The Academy's mission is to resurrect the combat skills, philosophies, principles of an accomplished European Medieval martial artist and to achieve a state which would be consistent with that of a medieval warrior in both technology and ideal." The goal of this organization is to resurrect European medieval martial arts to the same level as today's Asian martial arts schools and

academies, and to re-establish medieval combat as a viable 21st century martial art alternative. The objective is to not only achieve realism in the discipline of armoured and un-armoured combat, but also the philosophy and principles that surrounds this form of martial art.

In order to support the Academy's mission and goal, this document along with the companion instructor's guide entitled "The AEMMA Longsword Instructor's Guide" was written to provide the reader with the necessary reference and tools to train oneself and others in this form of martial art.

Book 1 provides the recruit/student with the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve the rank of **scholler**. All training and instruction builds upon what is learned at each level. Upon completion of this level of training, the student will be competent in performing all of the basic guard stances, fundamental offensive forms, drills and possess a basic historical knowledge of the martial art. A companion student's training guide provides the outline for the training program including the structure of the oral examination to be taken at the end of this training.

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Training Overview

The objective of this manual is to provide the student with a structured and detailed guide to follow for the purpose of training in the historical medieval martial arts and to prepare the student for the challenge for the prize of “**scholler**”. This manual is not intended to replace the principle historical sources, but is intended to augment them.

The medieval longsword, *langeswert*, or *spada longa*, was a specialized form of the “knightly” cruciform sword that developed in the early 13th century. Although it initially developed to combat reinforced mail armour, by the mid-15th century, the longsword had also become a “dueling” weapon in the city streets of Europe. This style of swordplay became so popular that sparring matches are recorded in Germany as late as the mid-18th century, two hundred years after the weapon’s usefulness on the battlefield had long since died out.

The introduction to the medieval grappling, dagger and longsword is designed to provide the student an intensive overview of the weapon and the basic techniques of its use. Upon completion of the course, the student will have a working knowledge of the historical terminology and techniques of the medieval masters, and will have been exposed to a wide variety of concepts, drills, and sparring/fighting sessions. This course presents the initial concepts that provide the framework for AEMMA’s medieval swordsmanship, and is expanded upon the later skills levels¹. In the end, the skills learned by the student through this training program can, in effect be used in today’s modern combat situations (well, except for the sword) because the combat techniques are consistent with today’s fighting situations. Therefore, from a personal enhancement perspective, if a student wishes to learn the art of self-defence against an attacker poised with a knife, or perhaps simple hand-to-hand engagements, even though the techniques are sourced from the 14th or 15th centuries, these techniques are also employed in today’s modern combat training programs. The end result of this training for both men and women are:

- a) Contributes to the individual’s overall strength, flexibility, balance & cardiorespiratory fitness;
- b) Build’s individual courage, confidence and self-discipline.

Training Objectives:

Academic: To provide the student with a historical overview of the medieval longsword, and its role in the history of historical swordsmanship.

Practical: To present a sequence of routines, methodologies, solo and partner drills, that will provide the groundwork for fighting with the longsword in a style derived from northern Italian and German sources of the 14th through to the 17th centuries.

¹ This paragraph and the previous were sourced from the Chicago Swordplay Guild student guide. The approach and objectives of CSG and AEMMA training programs are very similar.

Basic Principles

The following briefly describes the basic fight principles that the student must know and apply to successfully defeat an opponent. These principles are consistent with today's combat training systems.

a) Physical Balance

This refers to the student's ability to maintain his/her equilibrium and remain in a stable fight position during an engagement. This is critical for deploying a defensive maneuver or posture, and for launching an effective attack against the opponent. There are two aspects of balance that the individual must possess:

- The student must develop the ability to move the body, utilizing such concepts as passing steps and gathered steps as an example, and to ensure that the feet do not cross and are kept apart at approximately shoulder's width. Also the need to lower the body's center of gravity to enhance stability.
- Through training and experience, the student must also be able to move his/her body in an engagement to maintain balance and stability, while at the same time, exposing the opponent's weak points.

b) Mental Balance

A successful student must also maintain mental balance, in that he/she must not allow fear or excitement to overcome his/her ability to concentrate or react skillfully during a fight.

c) Position

This refers to the location of the student in relation to the opponent. An important principle when being attacked is to move the body to a safe defensive position in order to prevent the student from being hurt. Then, the student would look for a counter-attack opportunity. This principle would apply in both armed and unarmed engagements. Movement to an advantageous position will require accurate timing and distance perception.

d) Timing

The student must learn through experience, the best time to move to an advantageous position in an attack. If the movement is too soon, the opponent will anticipate the movement and deploy a counter or adjust his/her attack. Similarly, if the student moves too late, the opponent will be successful in delivering his/her strike or attack at the instant when the student is most vulnerable.

e) Distance

This describes the relative distance between individuals engaged in a fight. The student must learn how to position oneself at a distance that is most advantageous. Adjustments to this distance is continuous during an engagement to ensure that the student maintains the most advantageous range between himself/herself and the opponent.

f) Momentum

A critical principle that the student must learn to acquire is the understanding of the physics behind momentum. Momentum describes the body's tendency, while in motion, to continue in the direction of motion unless acted upon by another force. The greater the mass or speed of the movement, the greater momentum. This is a key principle that can be effectively employed during longsword attacks, whereby the student can leverage the momentum of an attack, and redirect the momentum behind the strike, and counter (parry) with an attack. This principle