

A transcription and English translation of “Vechtboek” – manuscript BPL 3281

Reinier van Noort

1-2-2014

School voor Historische Schermkunsten – www.bruchius.com



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About this document

The following document is a complete transcription and English translation of a manuscript fragment held in the collection of the Leiden University Library under Shelfmark BPL 3281. The manuscript consists of sixteen pages of roughly 190x150 mm², each containing one drawing of a dagger fighting technique, with a short descriptive text underneath each plate. It has been dated to ca. 1520-1530.

In the following transcription, uncertainties have been placed between brackets (“<...>”). These brackets have also been used in the translation, either to indicate these uncertainties in the transcription, or to indicate uncertainties in the translation. Square brackets (“[...]”) have been used to indicate additions to the transcription made for clarity. Where necessary, further comments on the transcription and translation have been added in footnotes.

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It[em] staec ieme na u van onder armen
 soe legt u rechte hant over u slincke ghecrust
 tret in mette rechte en volcht mette mette
 clincken na en tret noch eens ein en soe
 worptten tegen den gront oft stect u hant diep
 doore toot over zijne elleboghe en stect hem zijne
 hooft tussen u beene en claptten op zijne <rechten>
 en stecken in eene <sack>.

If someone thrusts at you below the arm, then place your right hand crosswise over your left, step in with the right and follow after with the left, and step in once more and in this way throw him against the ground, or thrust your hand through deep to over his elbow and thrust his head between your legs and clap on his <right> and thrust in one <go>.



It[em] oft Iema na u stake van onder soe legt
u handen den over dander u rechte hant bove
dat <nie> owen eene Duim niet en zije en treet
om mette rechte bene en worpt hem den erm
op u skower en nemt hem zijn Dagge oft slaetse
hem inden hals en tort sterk om i oft ij vers

If someone thrusts at you from below then place your hands one over the other your right hand on top so that your one thumb is not in¹ and step around with the right leg and throw his arm on your shoulder and take his dagger, or strike him in the neck and twist around strongly one or two turns.

¹ It is unclear what “niet en” means here. It could imply that the thumb is “not in”, or that it is “not one”, i.e. not alone – supported by the other hand.



It[em] oft ieme na u stake van onder
soe worp u Dagge tegen zijne steck en werpse
verre van u oft nemtse hem met uwer
clinker hant en alsoe hebdi beide Daggen.

If someone thrusts at you from below, then throw your dagger against his thrust and throw it far from you, or take it from him with your left hand and then you have both daggers.



It[em] den ghecruste steck van bove soe zalmen
 hem vangen en trecke hem sterck neder
 het verset daer af soe nemt zijn Dagge mettu
 <cruine>² en trekse hem om oft grijp hem met
 zijne elleboghe en duwet hem om in zijne buick

The crosswise thrust from above you will catch thus and then pull him down strongly. The counter to that, then take his dagger with your <pommel³> and pull it around or grab him by his elbow and push it around into his belly.

² This could possibly be supposed to read “duime”, meaning “thumb”.

³ A literal translation of “cruine” would be “crown”.



It[em] waert dat iema na u stake van boven
 en hi u mette collijere grepe soe ~~neem~~ grijpt
 hem zij <vuist> neeme zijn Dagghe met ower
 rechte hant en met ower scincke hant aen
~~o~~wen zijne elleboghe doute sterck van u en
 tort dobbel om en alsoe zijde hem guite en hebde
 zijn Dagghe

If someone thrusts at you from above and he grabs you by your clothing, then grab his fist. Take his dagger with your right hand and with your left at his elbow push strongly from you and twist around doubly and so you are <released from> him and have his dagger.



It[em] oft iema na u stake van ondere
soe zoldi u Dagghe in beide u handen
nemen en worpen hem u Dagghe vore
en laten hem daer tegen steken en gripen
hem dan zijn duime ghenaggen⁴ gheheeten
het prisoen

If someone thrusts at you from below you will take your dagger in both your hands and throw your dagger in front of him and let him thrust against it and then grab his thumb captured named the prison.

⁴ This should most likely read “ghevangen”, which is translated as “captured”.



It[em] oft iement na u stacke van bove gheheete
den haec soe zalment hem witer hant trecke
en leggen owen duim optte Dagghe bove opte
cruine en ont haecse hem maer ghi moet
owen rechten woet om stellen en onthaekse
hem en valt met ower slincker hant op
zijne rechte arm en dructe <toeter> verden neder

If someone thrusts at you from above, named the hook, thus you will pull it from his hand and place your thumb on top of the dagger on the pommel and hook⁵ it, but you must set your right foot around and hook him and fall with your left hand on his right arm and push it <all> further down.

⁵ A more literal translation would be “unhook”.



It[em] oft iemant na u scloeghe oft na u stake
 van boeven soe nemt hem zijn hant daer hi met
 stect oft slaet van onder zijn dagghe met ower
 clincker hant en met ower rechter hant stect
 tussen zijn benen en trect sterck <neder>⁶ zijn
 hant daer hi die Dagghe in heeft en alsoe
 woerpten op u skowerre en gate met striken

If someone strikes at you or thrusts at you from above then take his hand with which he thrusts or strikes from below his dagger with your left hand and with your right hand thrust between his legs and strongly pull down his hand in which he has the dagger and so throw him on your shoulders and go with the snare⁷.

⁶ Alternatively: “nader”, meaning “closer”.

⁷ The meaning of the Dutch word “striken” is unclear in this context. Here, it is interpreted as “strikken”; “snares”.



It[em] oft iema na u stake van bove soe zalme
hem onttreden mette rechten woete en gripen
met ~~met~~ ewer clincker hant aen zijne rechten
aerm u iiii vinggers bove en owen duim onder
owen elleboghe in zijn zijde en gripen hem dan
van onder zijn rechte been van onder zijn knie en
en licht zijn ben oppe en alsoe moet hij wallen
perfortse

If someone thrusts at you from above, you will step from him with your right foot and grab at his right arm with your left hand your four fingers above and your thumb below, your elbow in his side and then grab him under his right leg below his knee and lift his leg up and so he must fall by force.



It[em] oft ieme na u stake van onder soe worpst
hem u Dagghe tegen zijnen zijne steck en slaetse
hem witer hant laet u een hant over de zijne
loepen en nempse hem in ij manieren af

If someone thrusts at you from below, then throw him your dagger against his thrust and strike it out of his hand. Let your one hand go over his and take it from him in two manners.



It[em] waert dat ieme na u stake van bove
 gheheeten den haek soe legt owen duim boven
 opte cruine van owen daggen en teert achterwert
 om en onthaecse hem tort eene oft ij vers om
 en worpst hem zijn Dagghe witer hant.

If it were that someone thrusts at you from above, named the hook then place your thumb above on the pommel of your dagger and turn around backwards and hook⁸ it. Twist one or two turns around and throw his dagger out of his hand.

⁸ See footnote 5.



It[em] oft Iemen na u stake van bove en dat hi
u grepe metter collijere soe legt u hant opte zijne
en sclacet van onder oppe en grijpt hem zijn
hant daer hi zijn Dagge in heeft en trecse sterc
na u en metter ander hant aen zijne elleboghe
en tert starck om stect hi van onder soe legt
u hant op owen buick en nemtse hem ghelijc
den ghecrusten steck witer hant.

If someone thrusts at you from above and he grabbed you by the clothes, then place your hand on his and strike up from below and grab his hand in which he has his dagger, and pull this strongly to you and with the other hand at his elbow and twist around strongly. If he thrusts from below then place your hand on your belly and take it out of his hand just as the crosswise thrust.



It[em] den ghecrusten steck van boven soe zalmen
 hem vanggen en trecken hem sterck nederre het
 verset daer af soe nemt zijn Dagghe metten
 <hechte> en dous hem contrari om in zijnen
 buick <ocht> dout hem zijne elleboghe contrari
 om en alsoe nemt hem zijn Dagge

The crosswise thrust from above you will catch thus and pull him down strongly. The counter to that then take his dagger by⁹ the <binding>¹⁰ and push it contrary around in his belly. Also push his elbow contrary around and take his dagger from him so.

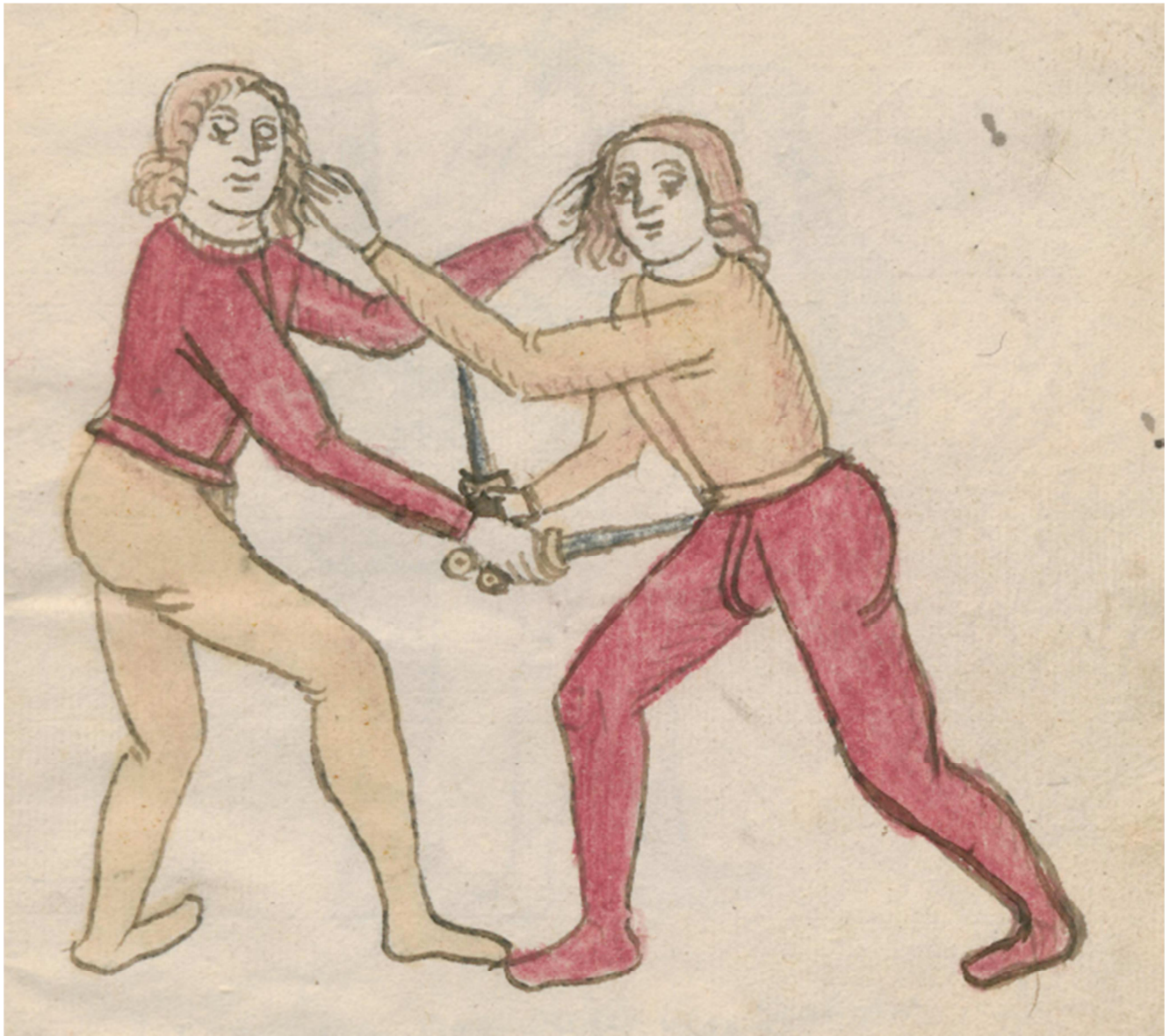
⁹ This could be either “by” or “with” depending on the meaning of the word “hechte”. See footnote 10.

¹⁰ This word is hard to make out in the manuscript. “hechte” could alternatively mean “close”. Possible alternatives for “hechte” are “rechte”, meaning “right” (i.e. with the right hand, though this would be unlikely as the right hand is trapped), or “hoch(t)e”, meaning “high” or “height”. Finally, the hilt could be what is intended.



It[em] vaert bij alsoe dat u iement in u haer
grepe en na u stak soe zalmen hem ierst
den steck versetten en gripen zijn Dagghe daer hi
met stect en versclaen hem zijn hant van bove
neder wert die hi in u haer heeft

If it were so that someone grabbed you by your hair and thrust at you, then you will first displace his thrust and grab his dagger with which he thrusts and beat his hand which he has in your hair from above downwards.



It[em] waert dat elck een Dagghe inder hant
hadde en grept mekanderen int haer soe wie
dat ierst stake die hadde zijn Dagghe verloeren
en alsoe hebdi beide Daggen

If it were that each had a dagger in hand and grabbed each other by the hair, then he who thrusts first has lost his dagger and then you have both daggers.



It[em] waert dat elck een Dagghe inder
hant hadde en grepen makanderen int
haer soe wie dat jerst stake die hadde sijn
Dagghe verloeren. It[em] waert dat bij also datse
beide die naelde staken soe moetmen gade
slaen en versetten hem zijne steck en metter
zelver hant soe moet manse uiter hant neme.

If it were that each had a dagger in hand and grabbed each other by the hair, then he who thrusts first has lost his dagger. If with that it were so that they both thrust the needle, then you must observe and displace his thrust and so with the same hand you must take it out of his hand.