

Rainer Welle,
... vnd mit der rechten faust ein mordstuck Baumanns Fecht- und
Ringkampfhandschrift,
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Reviewed by Daniel Jaquet



This two volume edition of the Codex I.6.4² from the Öttingen-Wallerstein collection in the Universitätsbibliothek in Augsburg¹ is exemplary. The author, a Germanist, sport scientist, and wrestler (federal coach), takes HEMA studies a step further with his academic skills merged with bodily know-how in the analysis and understanding of this specific literature, as he has shown already in 1993 with the publication of his dissertation.² He underscores the need for quality editions of a scholarly level, and recognizes only a few³ as being valuable in that perspective (p.11). I fully support this opinion and I would note furthermore that he surpasses any previous such work with his edition, which can be taken as a model of its kind.

The first volume is the commentary volume (240p.), containing not only a transcription meeting the highest standards (p.184–221) and a very detailed and precise codicological and iconological description with discussions and analyses (p. 20–107), but also a very interesting essay on communication structure of the fight books as a genre, with the

¹ The author discredits the alternative designation “Codex Wallerstein” and proposes instead “Baumanns Fecht- und Ringkampfhandschrift” (transl. Fencing and wrestling manuscript of Baumann) as being more proper (p.12)

² Welle, Rainer, ‘...und Wisse Das Alle Höbischeit Kompt von Deme Ringen’: *Der Ringkampf Als Adelige Kunst Im 15. Und 16. Jabrbundert: Eine Sozialhistorische Und Bewegungsbiographische Interpretation Aufgrund Der Handschriftlichen Und Gedruckten Ringlehren Des Spätmittelalters* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1993)

³ Namely: Bergner, Ute and Giessauf, Johannes, eds., *Wüргеgriff Und Mordschlag: Die Fecht- Und Ringlehre Des Hans Czynnere (1538): Universitätsbibliothek Graz, Ms. 963* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 2006) and Bauer, Matthias Johannes, ed., *Langes Schwert Und Schweinespiess: Die Anonyme Fechthandschrift Aus Den Versbütteten Beständen Des Historischen Archivs Der Stadt Köln* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 2009)

Baumann's Fight Book taken as case study (p.108–131) and an image concordance with later works stemming from the manuscript⁴ (p.132–183). This thoroughly documented part allows the author to fulfil some of the goals set at the end of the introduction (p.18–19). One such goal is to outline and discuss issues related to the manuscript itself, glossed over by historiography – including some of those concerning fundamental elements such as composition of the volume or dating. Another goal is to understand better the means of transmission of an embodied knowledge put in writing.

Nothing is left aside in his accurate examination of the manuscript, a book composed of two separate parts, bound together in the first half of the 16th c. He dates the first part to 1420 and the second to 1465–1470, based on study of the watermarks (p.27–34)⁵, language and writing (p.59–69), as well as by conducting a very meticulous analysis of the illustrations (p.70–105), even though – as he humbly notes – he is not trained as an art historian (p.70, n. 147). Efficient iconological analyses, such as this, are curiously lacking in the secondary literature on Fight Books. The potential of these might lead to a better understanding on the redaction processes of this primary literature, as well as allowing the identification of artistic networks, even workshops. Noteworthy is also his discussion on the composition of the quires and the complex structure (especially the 6th quire) when it was bound in the 16th c. (p.41–58); here he demonstrates his deep understanding of the content – although he does not mention his methodology or the importance of the experimentation in the process.

The essay on the relation between text and images in the description of complex embodied knowledge (p.109–131) is eye-opening in terms of showing the issues related to the intellection (or even interpretation?) of this literature. The need for thorough analysis of the semantic potential (both cognitive and sensorial) of both media in the reception are discussed in relative depth, in perspective of its didactic value. Briefly, he compares the hermeneutic choices (and therefore potential authorial intent) with other contemporary ones,⁶ and identifies the Baumann's Fight Book as didactic, compared to a “fight manual” (p.114) where the image and the text form an interdependent unit. His reasoning is supported by several examples and a useful table on the relation between text and image throughout the manuscript in appendix (p.225–229). Lastly, he addresses the tradition (iconological and philological) of the manuscript (p.129–131), where the issues related to the copy/re-writing processes are outlined. It is supported by a large image concordance (p.132–183).

The second volume is the facsimile. All leafs are represented with colour high quality pictures, referenced with the actual foliation, including covering (also the loose covering

⁴ *Gladiatoria* (Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellonska, Ms germ. quart. 16), Dürer Fight book (Wien, Albertina, Ms 26–232), Rast/Mair Fight book (Augsburg, Stadtarchiv, Schätze 82) and Mair Fight book (München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Icon. 393).

⁵ Incompletely, even erroneously, analysed by Hils (1985) and Leng (2009), see p. 29.

⁶ Hans Talhoffer Fight books and the *Gladiatoria* group (p.112), the Liechtenauer *Zedel* and the glosses (p.113), as well as Ott's Art of wrestling (p.115).

in appendix), pastedown and guard-leafs. This quality allows a smooth reading of the original text as well as a precise rendering of the detailed illustrations.

Both the scholar and the practitioner would appreciate this book. The latter may regret the absence of a translation, which could have been balanced by a technical glossary, regrettably missing.⁷ Apart from the sometime aggressive tone when disputing previous works – customary in some German academic literature – the most regrettable thing is the absence of any details about his method of interpretation. It is obvious that the author has a deep understanding of the practical skills written and depicted in the manuscript, since he uses such knowledge in several discussions in the commentary volume (e.g. p.53, 95, especially 108–126). How he acquired such knowledge and how he uses it to analyse source material remain sadly unmentioned. Besides these points, this two volume edition pushes up the standards very high and I truly hope that scholars and researchers will take it as a model for their own forthcoming editions. Distinguished by completeness, this is, and will remain, a benchmark study of this manuscript.

⁷ Customary and useful feature of scholarly editions. Both editions quoted in footnote 2 include such.