The medieval fencing manual is a valuable if little-studied source of information on the injuries likely to be caused in medieval combat since it provides instruction on techniques to be used with a wide variety of weapons, including the sword, as well as in unarmed combat. The majority of such texts date to the early fifteenth century and later, and (with one exception) the earliest extant fencing manuals of medieval Europe all come from the German-speaking region.\textsuperscript{1} Of these German manuals, all but one draw directly or indirectly on the fourteenth-century teachings of Johannes Liechtenauer.\textsuperscript{2} Although no direct written record of Liechtenauer’s fencing system exists, his influence on the development of medieval German fencing cannot be overstated;\textsuperscript{3} his

\textsuperscript{1} See: Jeffrey Forgeng and Alex Kiermayer, “‘The Chivalric Art’: German Martial Arts Treatises of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,” in \textit{The Cutting Edge: Studies in Ancient and Medieval Combat}, ed. Barry Molloy (Stroud: Tempus, 2007), 153–67; see in particular 153. The exception is a Middle English manuscript (London, British Museum, Harleian Manuscript 3542, ff. 82–85), dating to the fifteenth century.

\textsuperscript{2} No details about Liechtenauer’s life are currently known other than that he was probably active during the fourteenth century. The earliest manuscript containing his teachings, Nuremberg, Germanisches Museum MS 3227a, implies that Liechtenauer was still alive at the time of writing. The manuscript, a commonplace book, also contains a calendar for the year 1389, but this is not necessarily the year in which the book was written. See: Christian Tobler, \textit{In Saint George’s Name: An Anthology of Medieval German Fighting Arts} (Wheaton, IL: Freelance Academy Press, 2010), 6. The only early German fencing manual without any obvious link to Liechtenauer and his followers is Leeds, Royal Armouries MS 1.33. This is also the earliest European fencing manual known, dating approximately to between 1270 and 1310. The manual depicts lessons in sword-and-buckler combat without armor; the fencing master is portrayed as a tonsured cleric and one student, unusually, is female.

\textsuperscript{3} Hans-Peter Hils, \textit{Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des langen Schwertes} (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1985), 7; Mark Rector, \textit{Medieval Combat: A Fifteenth-Century Illustrated Manual of Swordfighting and Close-Quarter Combat} (London: Greenhill, 2000), 11–12; Dierk Hagedorn,
teachings survive in over sixty manuals written by his students and their successors. His instructions are deliberately obscure, written in rhyming couplets that may have been designed as mnemonics for use during training, and each of the manuals authored by his disciples provides glosses explaining and augmenting his original instructions.

Liechtenauer’s earliest followers include Paulus Kal, whose work (Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 1507) is dated to c. 1470; Peter von Danzig, whose surviving text is dated to 1452; and a third fencing master most commonly known as Sigmund Ringeck. The manuals authored by Kal and Ringeck each provide reasonably complete records of Liechtenauer’s verses, together with detailed glosses. Extra light on the theory behind Liechtenauer’s system is shed by a fragmentary fourteenth-century treatise contained in Nuremberg, Germanisches Museum, MS 3227a, in which an anonymous follower of Liechtenauer discusses the theoretical basis for his techniques in contrast with those of other contemporary fencing instructors. Versions of Sigmund Ringeck’s fencing manual survive in Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Codex Mscr. Dresd. C 487, and in Glasgow Museums, R.L. Scott Collection MS E.1939.65.341. The Glasgow manuscript dates to 1508, while the Dresden manuscript was originally thought to belong to the early 1400s but has recently


To date, only one version of Ringeck’s manual (Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Codex Mscr. Dresd. C 487) has been published in the form of a critical edition: Martin Wierschin, Meister Johann Liechtenauers Kunst des Fechtens, MTU 13 (Munich: Beck, 1965). Other works providing transcriptions or translations of Liechtenauer’s teachings include the following: David Lindholm and Peter Svärd, Sigmund Ringeck’s Knightly Art of the Longsword (Boulder, CO: Paladin, 2003), includes a translation of part of Ringeck’s text; Hagedorn, Peter von Danzig, who gives a transcription and translation of Rome, Bibl. Dell’Academia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana, Cod. 1449, 44 A 8 (Codex Danzig), including the work of Peter von Danzig; and Grzegorz Zabinski, The Longsword Teachings of Master Liechtenauer – The Early Sixteenth Century Swordsmanship Comments in the “Goliath” Manuscript (Torun: Marszalek, 2010). A further invaluable resource is the Wiktenauer website, including online transcriptions of manuscripts in the Liechtenauer tradition by Dierk Hagedorn among others. See: <http://www.wiktenauer.com/> (accessed 15 June 2014). English translations are provided in places, as well as translations into other languages, although the quality is inconsistent.

This theoretical discussion is often erroneously attributed to Pfaffe Hanko Döbringer, another of Liechtenauer’s students (see: Hils, Meister Johann Liechtenauer, 104–10; see also: Forgeng and Kiermayer, “The Chivalric Art,” 155).

Henceforth referred to as “the Dresden manuscript” and “the Glasgow manuscript.”