Summary and Conclusions: Silent Men and the Art of Fighting

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> "And in relation to this we learn from the above-mentioned men of worth that honor is not achieved through spending much time in keeping the body delightfully comfortable."
> (GEOFFROI DE CHARNY, p. 125, translation E. KENNEDY)

Geoffroi de Charny makes an essential point of the relation between fighters and their bodies short and clear: The body is seen as a means to an end, as an instrument to acquire honour, recognition as a (good) fighter. The papers collected in the volume at hand as the result of the conference "killing and being killed" look for this use of the body as they examine practices contrary to the preservation and care of bodies, practices aiming at the destruction or at least the disabling of fighting bodies. In this context, the call for papers asked for articles contributing to the following areas and questions, listed according to their occurrence in the life of a fighter:

a) Shaping bodies for battle:
Which practices were used to make bodies fit for battle?
What bodily techniques were taught and trained?
What was seen as a fighter's ideal physical appearance?
How did fighters physically experience the shaping of their bodies?

b) Using bodies in battle:
Which ways of using one's body in battle were existing and common?
What were the conditions and objectives under which the own body was risked?
How did fighters experience physical dangers and how did they speak about them?

c) Bodily injuries through battle:
What kind of injuries and violations appeared and how frequently did they appear?
How did fighters experience physical injuries and how did they communicate about them?
How did people treat injured bodies – individually and within the social context?
How did fighters prepare themselves for physical injuries and how did they treat their injured companions?

d) Dead fighters. Dead bodies:
How did fighters experience the killing (hostile) and the dying of (befriended, allied, kindred) combatants?
How did they speak and write about it?
How did a fighter's approach to and dealing with the own mortality differ from the concepts of non-fighters?
How did they deal with their fear of death?
How were dead fighters treated? Could a fighter survive his dead body?

In the following paper, I shall attempt to sum up the answers given in the different contributions to this volume. Having in mind that those summarised articles treat events, persons and material that differ greatly with respect to their temporal and cultural context, the goal of developing a bigger picture seems disputable. Such a bigger picture cannot cover all historical specifics of its parts nor can it be seen as an overall theory of bodies in battle in the middle ages or a (virtually) complete description of the practices involved. Nevertheless, such a summary can provide some insights into the patterns that occur at several points of time and in different places in the era and henceforth lead to a first cautious draft for a synthesis of our knowledge with respect to the ways

bodies were used in the field of killing and being killed. Therefore, the articles shall not be summarised separately with the goal of describing their respective argumentation and contexts, but are as resources to answer the main questions of the conference.[1]

I. Shaping bodies for battle

The first set of questions asks about the practices of corporal preparation. The answers given can be assigned to three areas: The shaping by learning respectively training, shaping by equipment and – contrarily – the disabling of bodies.

The most fundamental requirement getting a body in shape for battle is discussed by JUDITH MENGLER, who informs us about the difficulties in logistics and food supply shown through the example of Ramon Muntaner's "Crònica". No body can be fully functional in battle – as in all other instances – unless it is well fed. Although this fact cannot be denied and should be considered in every research on a particular battle or military activity, little can be said about special nutritional practices for the fighter. DANIEL JAQUET provides hints to common beliefs on the right nutrition for fighters with regard to the preparation for judicial combats. According to the Königsegg treatise, "greasy food" should be avoided, "St-John bread" and "rye bread soaked in water" are beneficial.[2] The advice for fighters that they have to be able to endure without the right nutrition appears more often. As GIULIA MOROSINI demonstrates in several examples, one practice of shaping the body considered highly relevant by contemporaries was suffering as an exercise in endurance. This seems to shape not only the individual body of the fighter but also the community, the body as a corporation of fighters.[3]

Furthermore, the fight books inform us about several practices used directly to shape a body for battle. Beside some notes on possibly useful

1 The special character of a summary and synthesis leads to a spare use of research literature beyond the volume at hand, this paper therefore cannot claim to be a contribution to the research on bodies in battle on its own.

2 See JAQUET, p. 139.

3 See MOROSINI, p. 171, see also on suffering as a fighter's virtue and as community building characteristic of the "order of knighthood" can be found in GEOFFROI DE CHARNY'S "book of chivalry", pp. 174-177.

distractions, "'throwing stones and javelins, dancing and jumping, fencing and wrestling, mock jousting and tourneying and courting beautiful ladies'" can be found here.[4] It seems plausible to suggest that those practices – or most of them – were widespread as training methods, as they also appear in didactic literature for the knightly youth and refer to classical disciplines of bodily exercises.[5] Surely, the fight masters taught their students a broad set of body techniques directly aiming to harm or kill their opponents.

ERIC BURKART examines the ways of mediation used to make the fight students fit for combat: "At a basic level, fighters of the past were socialised into certain ways of using their bodies in combat." This process happened through "learning by imitation".[6] In addition to this widespread method of implicit learning, there were also ways of explicit mediation, which can be found in fight books. The art of fighting taught with – not just through – these books, was developed by fight masters, who had an interest in keeping their valuable knowledge secret. Therefore, they used several mediation techniques (encryption through mnemonic verses and depictions) that could only be used by those already introduced in the basics of their art of fighting and communication.[7]

In other cases, there is usually little information of the particular training fighters received – as the example of Theoderich shows, of whom we have to assume that he learned how to fight as a hostage in Constantinople, without having certain evidence of it.[8]

The state of source material for the shaping of bodies through equipment should be much better – already because of the need for inventory lists and account books. IAIN MCINNES shows several examples for the relevance of good equipment. Especially the quality of armour can be seen as a vital preparation for battle, as it could protect

4 Out of the Königsegg treatise, according to JAQUET, p. 139.
5 For instance in the "Ritterspiegel" of JOHANNES ROTHE from the early 15th century, line 2693f., p. 184, which refers to VEGETIUS' "epitoma rei militaris".
6 BURKART, p. 117.
7 See BURKART, p. 117-121, see also JAQUET on the topic of secrecy, p. 136-138.
8 See BERNDT, p. 27.

fighters from both missile and close combat weapons.[9] In fact, the type of protective gear worn and consequentially its ability to protect its owner much depended on the status of the fighter.[10] Another kind of shaping through equipment seems less sophisticated for the era, as ALASTAIR J. MCDONALD brought up, "Uniforms were not routinely worn", leading to the problem that "determining regular and irregular troops […] is thus an impossible task."[11]

Disabling bodies is broached especially in the papers of BOGDAN-PETRU MALEON and ALASTAIR J. MCDONALD as ways of practising symbolic violence. Aiming to the social marginalisation by cancellation of personal identity,[12] the factual destruction of fighting capability,[13] practices of mutilation and especially amputation are to be named here.

Shaping one's body for battle took place at all times. Training techniques were used, but they were not often documented in the era discussed here. Shaping of a body does not just refer to the body as a pure anatomical thing but also to the body as a combination of equipment, flesh, and bones. In the later middle ages, several circles of experts (fight masters) in fighting and fight training become evident. One can assume that they existed long before in a lower and less formal grade of organisation. The art of fighting seems to be one of several types using the same techniques of mediation as other arts of the time and the same modes of organisation. Body shaping was a mandatory condition for taking a leading position in warrior communities and hence for taking a leading position in a society, which very much equalled *bellatores* and *nobiles*.

II. Using bodies for battle

How was the fighter's body used in battle? The findings can be assigned to four areas: Using one's body to get into battle, to avoid battle, to obtain or maintain a leading position and to act in battle. As well as

9 See MACINNES, p. 61, 64.
10 IBID. p. 62.
11 MACDONALD, p. 213.
12 See MALEON, p. 54.
13 See MCDONALD, p. 212.

these areas, it could be discussed how the use of bodies differs in particular fighting contexts, but as DANIEL JAQUET stated, our understanding of the distinction between "playful" and "serious" combat situations is still to be clarified.[14]

The first step in using one's body for battle is having one's body chosen by being considered fit for battle. Giulia Morosini shows a significant example of selection criteria put to account by the condottiero Braccio da Montone, who preferred recruits, "'who were respectable for the signs of the wounds in the face and who had the other limbs torn by blows'".[15] As was discussed during the conference, a fighter's body – especially the bodies of those fighter's, who made their living by means of war – was his hallmark, the medium for showing ones value on the market of violence. Beside the display of expensive cloth and weapons, scars could have played an important role for this display. In a wider sense, the fighter's body was used to get into battle – or into a battle group, one might say a community of violence –[16] by showing the willingness to expose it to violent action and ultimately to death.[17]

Certainly, a fighter's physical appearance could be used to win a conflict without actual combat – as was discussed during the conference. The presence of well-armed and trained forces, the display of their potential for violent actions and the willingness to fight was often quite a threat to enemies, and therefore led to surrender or the payment of a ransom or Danegeld.[18]

Naturally, groups of fighter's could not abstain from factual violence all the time; this is particular true for leading personalities. Besides his tactical skills and other specific qualities for leadership, the head of such a group was regularly expected to take part in combat himself, and his actions were often narrated as being outstanding and exemplary. Using one's body to prove the qualification for leadership and therefore legitimise ones position as a leader was even more necessary, as a group was held together primarily for the purpose of violent

14 See JAQUET, p. 146.
15 Pompeo Pellini's History and Life of Braccio de Montone (1572) quoted following MOROSINI, p. 175.
16 See BERNDT with regard to the research group „Gewaltgemeinschaften"(communities of violence), p. 18.
17 IBID. On obligation practices, pp. 20f..
18 For instance, see IBID. p. 29.

activities – as is shown in the examples of Gothic war bands as well as in those of the companies' of late medieval Italy.[19] A downright expressive way of displaying a leader's abilities can be seen in the narrations of a leader killing the head of the enemy forces. Those narrations can be interpreted as a symbolic expression of the victory pictured in a one-on-one combat. In addition to the opportunity to prove active skills on the battlefield, leaders had to show their ability of bearing the hardships of warfare together with their men to strengthen their position.[20] The respect of their followers could be improved by exposing themselves to the risk of being harmed or even killed.

The mentioned qualities, i.e. the ability and willingness to apply violence as well as to suffer it, were in fact not only demanded from leaders but from all fighters – although we usually only read of the deeds of higher status fighters. Related to these abilities, the question as to when to make use of them has to be raised. Before a fighter could apply violence, he had to decide on whom and when it should be applied. GIULIA MOROSINI shows several reflections on the last-mentioned question in the writings of condottieri, linked to some cultural stereotypes about foreign fighters and their mentality.[21] One element of the query whom to hit was the problem to determine who part of a violent conflict is – or, in a wider sense, who was a legitimate aim for violent actions in general. TREVOR RUSSELL SMITH shows how contemporary fighters in their records discussed this question of the distinction between combatants and non-combatants.[22] ALASTAIR J. MACDONALD discusses the issue of different war practices in the binary opposition guerrilla vs. conventional warfare, which is often applied by scholars to English-Scottish conflicts of the late Middle Ages. He therefore compares different theoretical approaches (e.g. ethnic, cultural and subcultural motives) in terms of their explanatory force. He arrives at the result that the opposition has to be rejected in the first place, because the recognition of regular or irregular troops was nearly impossible (lack of uniforms, as aforementioned). For the example of Anglo-Scottish wars, the cultural differences were not as eminent as former

19 See IBID, pp. 20-22, MOROSINI, p. 168, summing up p. 189.
20 See the before-mentioned remarks on suffering as a group.
21 See IBID, pp. 165f..
22 For the contemporary distinction see SMITH, p. 80.

researchers saw them and there is a lack of evidence for a particular Gaelic cruelty. Consequently, MACDONALD suggests, "there seems more promise in seeking to locate intensification of Anglo-Scottish hostilities in social make-up rather than ethnicity."[23] With regard to the question of violent practice, it can be stated that "specific circumstances, rather than typological models" have the potential to explain the grade of atrocity and brutality in warfare.[24]

III. Bodily injuries by means of battle

What were the consequences of the participation in battle for the bodies? To what risks did fighters expose their physical well-being? In his opening speech, JÖRG ROGGE stated that ignoring injuries and fighting until exhaustion was occasionally seen as proof of boldness and resistibility, examples for such narratives can be found in the self-assessments of fighters or in the battle accounts of chroniclers.[25] As discussed above, suffering visually was a suitable way for leading personalities to secure their position in a community of violence. Beside the opportunity of displaying joint pain to constitute and stabilise such a community, a leader could gain prestige by performing exemplary and outstanding acts of endurance. With regard to this, GIULIA MOROSINI shows how military mentality and its virtues could be connected with bodily practices, as the latter were used as signs or proof for the possession of the first. The most significant virtue represented through such practices seems to be fortitude. Its representation could range from withstanding attacks by enemies up to suffering the pains of medical treatment without showing any signs of hurting. The brave and therefore silent patient can hence be seen as one manifestation of the valiant fighter.[26]

Despite the sources' focus on suffering leaders, one has to assume that fighters of lower status suffered more regularly than members of the nobility. This instance can be explained as being due to their inferi-

23 MACDONALD, p. 217.
24 IBID., p. 219, with reference to the sack of Berwick in 1296.
25 See ROGGE, pp. 10f..
26 An expressive example can be seen in the case of Giovanni de Medici fixing and illuminating himself during the amputation of his leg, see MOROSINI, p. 182.

or equipment and a lesser chance of receiving mercy due to their lower value as hostages. Although as ALASTAIR J. MACDONALD puts it "the completeness of the exclusion of the lower orders from martial codes has surely been overstated".[27] Which particular injuries caused the suffering of fighters? IAIN MACINNES examines the "types of injuries involved, the areas of the body most affected and the ability – where possible to discern – of these men to survive the injuries they suffered."[28] For the Anglo-Scottish conflicts, he identifies missile weapons, especially longbows, as a prominent cause of physical harm. Although it can be suggested "that these attacks were more of an 'impediment' than they were fatal", especially injuries to the face were common occurrences.[29] The head – and particularly the eyes – of an opponent seems to be a prominent aim of violent actions in several descriptions, which can be explained as a result of less sophisticated protective gear for this area and its crucial importance for the function of a human body. A successful hit on the head could hence secure a 'quick win' and was often used – the examples given by IAIN MACINNES, and the widely spread eye gouging in trials by combat shown by DANIEL JAQUET serve as evidence for this insight.[30] The type of injury one probably received depended much on the spatial position one occupied on the battlefield. While fighters on foot had to fear mainly the aforementioned hits on the head, fighters on horseback were hit more often on legs and feet.[31] The weapons used can be seen as another strong determiner of the injury produced – or possibly just narrated.[32] However, inferences should be drawn cautiously. Although written sources seem to draw a realistic picture of the injuries narrated, they probably do not give us a fully realistic account of injuries on medieval battlefields. It is likely that their purpose in narrating wounds and sufferings is to emphasise the dangers of warfare and particularly the capacity of their protagonists to face and bear those dangers. The results of these dangers and the manner of dealing with them could be used to prove ones mili-

27 See MACDONALD, p. 211.
28 MACINNES, p. 60.
29 IBID., p. 62.
30 See JAQUET, p. 141-145, MACINNES, p. 61, 70.
31 MACINNES, pp. 63, 69-71.
32 E.g. lance thrusts were commonly related to torso injuries, IBID, pp. 68f..

tary activity, boldness and bravery – whether they were real consequences of violent actions or just presented as such.[33]

Furthermore, the investigation not only leads to insights on the types of injuries regularly suffered by fighters but also provides us with insight into practices applied to already injured bodies. Stories of medical treatments could serve the aim of representing the sturdiness of a fighter or his capacity to recover from former injuries – as above-mentioned –, which may explain their regular appearance in the sources; however, they can also provide us with some knowledge of the frequency of medical aid in medieval warfare.[34]

As a last example for the presentation of injuries in the sources, an episode out of the narrations about Theoderich shall be applied. On one hand an example for exemplary violence dealt by a leading fighter – as mentioned above – on the other the description of Theoderich killing Odoaker referred to by GUIDO BERNDT shows us a kind of 'counter-narration'. Theoderich's alleged statement that his opponent lacked bones, so that his sword easily penetrated his whole body, uses the ideal of an outstandingly tough leader to construct the image of a completely non-ideal leader. [35]

Suffering could have symbolic benefit. Signs of suffering could be used for future fights or to legitimise a leading position. Narrated injuries often occurred in the face (especially violations of the eyes). A man not able to take blows was seen as an unsuitable leader and, consequently, not a leader for long.

IV. Dead fighters, dead bodies

What if suffering injuries was no longer possible? The question of dealing with dead fighters was only treated to a small extent during the conference; nonetheless, a few remarks can be made on those practices. Where dead bodies were discussed, they appeared mainly as media of

33 As afore-mentioned in II, using bodies to get into battle. See again MOROSINI, pp. 179-181, 183.

34 See MACINNES, p. 72, asking for the access to medical care as one possible explanation for casualty rates.

35 See BERNDT, p. 31.

communication. BOGDAN-PETRU MALEON illustrates a slew of symbolic practices operated by the use of corpses in the Byzantine Empire. Two types of practices can be discerned: Those aiming to signal and prove the victory over an enemy and those aiming to (symbolical) destroy an enemy once and for all. The first relied on the main resource of individual recognition, the head or more precisely the face of an opponent. While the body (torso and limbs) were burned or thrown away, the head was regularly shown publically impaled on a spear.[36] The practice of stripping off the insignia of those sentenced to death before beheading them, can be seen as a practice of removing the social status of a body and therefore excluding it from a community. The ultimate exclusion was realised in those practices aiming to the complete annihilation of a body and therefore its 'owner' and his memory. One can assume the symbolic meaning of bodily parts from the practices applied to them – e.g. castration and the amputation of the right arm seem to point to their particular relevance.[37] ALASTAIR J. MACDONALD shows comparable examples for this kind of symbolic violence, namely the act of chopping William Hesilrig to pieces or the narration of fighters playing soccer with their opponent's heads as an especially brutal way to signal their supremacy.[38]

A rather friendly way of treating a dead fighter's body is shown by GIULIA MOROSINI, who gives the example of troops gathering around the body of their leader, which could be understood as a ritual to stabilize the community of fighters and therefore building up an independent company.[39]

Despite few examples of fighters acting in a respectful manner towards the corpse of combat victims, in most cases discussed here, dead fighters were treated brutally, eventually with deterrence in mind. Practices of the final destruction of bodies seem to be of particular interest in some respect to the meaning a fighter's body could convey. Following up the thought of shaping a fighter's body through equipment, plundering dead bodies could be seen as destruction of the unit of flesh, bones and armament, and therefore as disintegration of a fighter's body.

36 See MALEON, pp. 45-48.
37 IBID., p. 49.
38 MACDONALD, pp. 201, 211.
39 MOROSINI, p. 182f..

V. Conclusions: Fighting as a culture of body usage

What can be concluded from these findings? How do they fit together, and do they fit together at all? Do they have more in common than 'something with bodies and fighting'? First, the discussions during the conference showed that many sources were not systematically considered with regard to bodily practices and experiences; future research can react to this instance. The genre of fight books seems to be especially promising to contain valuable insights to the topic.[40] The same can be stated for the area of medical treatments. The examination of medieval fighters, their bodies and practices therefore needs a broad foundation in different types of sources, because most of the common historical material is silent on the matter. As GIULIA MOROSINI formulates, to a great extent, we have to deal with silent men if we ask fighters about their bodies.

This silence seems to be prominent in two ways: As the silence of injured and suffering fighters on their pain, which can be seen as the result of body control and the display of this control at the same time. In addition, silence as the consequence of the particular character of corporal bound knowledge, which can be understood as a form of 'tacit knowledge', as ERIC BURKART suggested. This double silence is indeed an eminent obstacle for the research on medieval fighters and their bodies, but it can partially be bypassed if other sources – especially illustrations and actual corporal remains – are involved. However, the effective combination of historical – text-based – knowledge with the findings of neighbouring disciplines still seems to be in its infancy, although the awareness for its relevance and the number of exemplary studies is growing.

These preliminary notes may provide a first impression of the main issues of the conferences discussion; nonetheless, they produced several connectible insights to our topic:

The manifest connection between the aforementioned findings seems to be their way of talking about the body, respectively the ways of handling the body talked about: The body appears as an instrument, a

40 See the papers of JAQUET and BURKART.

tool or weapon to fight. It appears as a resource and a stake to risk; and last but not least as a sign, an evidence for previous action.

The body was used as an instrument for war or more precise an instrument for enacting violence, which could be prepared for particular practices such as distinct body techniques of fighting (i.e. fighting in different terrains, situations, in single-combat or groups, with different weapons, etc.). Having this instrumental view in mind, bodies could also be prepared to be unable to enact violence or particular practices of violence.[41]

The body was therefore a resource in war, as the practice of war needs bodies able to deal with violence (in both possible directions), but it was a symbolic resource as well. Showing a well-prepared and eventually experienced body marked by scars and comparable signs of former action, could be used by fighters as a symbolic capital, which offered them a better chance to enter into (well) paid service. The body was therefore a kind of certificate or CV for fighters to proof their abilities and experiences. It could also be a symbolic capital used by warlords or other military leaders to win a battle before it even begun by means of scaring their enemies – and it could be used in the opposite way by showing the results of violent actions on the body of an enemy to prevent others from taking up arms.[42]

Following this, the body was (perhaps) the most valuable resource in violent actions; however, it was a resource that could not be saved because it was only useful if its integrity was constantly exposed to risks. Consequently, a fighter's body was the instrument of violence and the most prominent object at stake in violent contest. This multidimensional position renders it plausible to consider the body as the core element of a fighter culture, which creates meaning by using bodies in different symbolic and very practical ways. Examining this use of bodies offers – this seems to be the main result of the volume at hand – insights in a culture that recruited its political elite out of the order of fighters and therefore represented power not least through the depiction of armed and violently able bodies.

41 As seen in the example of amputated English archers shown by MACDONALD, p. 212.

42 See the considerations by MACDONALD – especially under the paragraph "symbolic violence", pp. 209-213 – and by MALEON.

In a second step, there is especially one practice (or group of practices) which comes to mind. ERIC BURKART spoke of a culture of fighting consisting of three items ("actual fighting practice", "body techniques of combat" and "fighting systems as […] sets of favoured body techniques"). Such a culture could – referring to the conference title – involve two techniques: the technique of killing and the technique of being killed respectively dying. One could refer to these as cultural techniques because they are socially embedded and traditional practices, consisting of much less complex practices themselves. Therefore, formulated in basic terms, fighting could be separated into giving and receiving blows – or violence in general. While dealing out violence consists of the practice of deciding whom to hit, when to hit and how to hit, hitting itself, defeating and killing an enemy (which does not have to be part of fighting), receiving violence consists of the practice of suffering (without showing), regenerating after a fight or the art of dying honourably as a fighter.

Those two main practices of fighting can be connected to virtues associated with fighters: Giving violence in the right manner requires morality and prudence to make the right decisions, and agility and strength to follow up with the right actions. Receiving violence needs fortitude and bravery to be ready and willing to receive, and stamina and resistibility to be able to bear it. The connection between practices and virtues, the link to cultural ideals and their narrative or iconic mediation makes fighting understandable as a cultural phenomenon itself, as it combines contemplating the body and its usage with questions regarding the mental (i.e. a specific mind-set)[43] and social conditions of corporal practices.

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43 BURKART, pp. 116f..

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The used contributions to the volume at hand are not listed separately here.