

THE KNIGHTLY ART OF COMBAT  
OF FILIPPO VADI  
(ITALIAN MASTER AT ARMS OF THE XV CENTURY)

(WORKING TITLE)

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated, for their patience in bearing our frantic dedication to bring back to life the ancient Italian martial science, to our wives and daughters Irene and Sofia Rubboli and Barbara and Sara Cesari.

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## SHORT NOTE TO THE TRANSLATION

“Traduttore = traditore”, i.e. “translator = traitor”.

This is an old Italian saying.

The reality beyond this is that when you translate a text you are forced to choose an interpretation of it, without any possibility to avoid such choice.

In the case of a text like Filippo Vadi's manual on fencing with the two-hand sword and other weapons, this is still more evident, as many parts of it contain a big amount of ambiguity.

For example many phrases can be interpreted in a completely different or even opposite way according to which word we think is the phrase's subject and which is the direct object.

However, in most cases, on the basis of our knowledge of other medieval authors (mainly Fiore dei Liberi) and of our sparring experience with the weapons treated by our Author, we are reasonably confident that our interpretation is the right one.

Anyhow, being this the case, we decided that it was of basic importance for the honesty of our work to include also a transcription of the original text in Italian.

Translating the original text, we have always conserved the precise technical meaning of Vadi's phrases (naturally, according to our interpretation of it), but we decided to opt for a readable and enjoyable text, and not a literally translated one, so we did not feel uncomfortable translating “portar guerra” (to bring war) with “to fight”, to transform passive in active phrases and so on.

Also, we did not try to keep the rhyme and verse of the original, but we tried instead to give an idea of it by means of our clumsy poetic prose, for which we humbly ask your to remember that English is not our mothertongue.

Finally, we chose to use modern English instead of XV century or Renaissance English, because this is a book that has been written to be read by as many people as possible, not to please an insignificant minority of scholars.

We are convinced of it, because we think that Master Vadi's opinions and advices are worth reading today like in those times, and maybe today, in these times of confusion, they may be even more useful as a guide for us all, for all the people, in the US, in Italy and elsewhere, that consider themselves the heirs of the great civilisation that gave birth to the Medieval and Renaissance knights.

A final note: this book is not a translation of our Italian book “L'arte cavalleresca del combattimento”, published by Il Cerchio, Rimini, 2001.

It is based on it for many aspects, but several changes has been made, for example it includes in the Technical Appendix many references to the Getty manuscript of the Flos Duellatorum, which that book did not consider, as well as much more comparisons with Marozzo.

The interpretation of some techniques has changed, although most of them has not, and we have included some more books in English in the bibliography.

Generally speaking, today we are more aware that Vadi's treatise is a real junction point between the Medieval treatises, in particular the Flos Duellatorum, and the early Renaissance ones like Marozzo's Opera Nova and the other manuals of the Bolognese School.

## 1 - Medieval Fencing in Italy and Europe

Not much is known about the discipline of fencing in the first centuries of the Middle Ages.

We can presume that the art of fencing in the classical world was a rational and refined science, from the many iconographic evidence and the few chapters dedicated to it in the military manuals of the Roman times, but it seems to have disappeared after the fall of the Roman Empire.

Unfortunately no technical manuals have been found, but the medieval illustrations and epic texts of the centuries around the year 1000 shows us mostly combat in armour (hauberk), with powerful cutting blows, in Italy like in the rest of the continent.

The change from classical refined fencing to such kind of fight may be partially due to the kind of armour in use, that forces to throw powerful blows with the aim of breaking the hauberk, and also in part to a return of fighting methods that had already been typical of Northern Europe in the ancient ages.

However, the emphasis on the powerful blows typical of this period could be due at least in part to an epic "topos" more than to the reality of combat.

In the epic literature of the period it is possible to find only a few references to real fencing techniques.

For example, just to mention a few, in the "Chanson de Guillaume" of the epic cycle of Provence, it appears an action named "tour français", in which the fencer that executes the technique, after having parried with the shield, turns on himself and hits the opponent to the nape of the neck.

Again, in the last battle of the epic poem "Havelok the Dane", the hero succeeds in severing the usurper's hand with a "mezzo tempo" (half-time) blow, i.e. a blow that hits the opponent while he's bringing his attack; often it is the right hand of the opponent, that he brings ahead to hit, which remains hurt.

Both those techniques indicate some refinement of discipline and techniques, in contrast with the idea of a training aimed only to the development of strength and endurance.

Finally, again in the epic cycle of Provence, we find that some characters are indicated as "fencing masters".

Coming back to the Italian peninsula, in the XIII century novel about the Arthurian hero Tristan known as "Tristano Riccardiano", we find that fencing training is mentioned many times as a daily activity of young squires and knights.

And also in the XIII century we begin to find more documents that inform us more specifically about the status of fencing science and fencing schools.

In Italy martial training had never been restricted to the noble class like in the rest of Europe.

The same can be told of the joust and other similar military exercises, except for the quintane that was generally permitted to the popular classes also in the rest of the continent.

We have proof of the existence of several "societates", entities in many aspects similar to modern no-profit societies, dedicated to the training of young people in the use of arms, both mounted and on foot, in many city-states of the Italian regions of Lombardy, Tuscany, Emilia.

Such “societates”, made up of well-off but not noble citizens, had names like Società dei Forti (Society of the Strong), dei Gagliardi (of the Brave), della Spada (of the Sword), della Lancia (of the Lance), della Tavola Rotonda (of the Round Table), etc. However, the first proof of the existence in Italy of true fencing masters is not related to such groups but to the noble class.

We know that a Master Goffredo, fencer, taught to the warlike clergyman Patriarch Gregorio da Montelongo in 1259, in Cividale del Friuli, the same town that was to become the fatherland of the first Italian fencing writer, Master Fiore dei Liberi. In the same town between 1300 e il 1307 there have been some legal acts regarding a Master Arnoldo, “scharmitor” (fencer), and in 1341 another document names a Pertoldus, fencer, probably a German.

In the same century and in the same town we find Master Domenico from Trieste, Pietro, another fencer, also a German, and Master Franceschino from Lucca (Tuscany).

Always in the North-Eastern region of Friuli we find notice of other three fencing masters active in the XIII century.

We have to say that in that century the German school was in a period of great splendor, and it is precisely in that country and in that century that the first fencing treatises of the Middle Ages appeared.

The oldest treatise available today is the Manuscript I.33 of the Royal Armouries of London, dated around the year 1300.

This text, written in Latin but with many words in ancient German, presents, in a way generally quite understandable, a well developed fencing method for combat with sword and buckler (a little round shield to be hold with the left hand).

Such method is taught by a “sacerdos” (a clergyman, probably a monk) to his “discipuli et clientuli” (little disciples and followers, or clients).

The basic technique of the “sacerdos” is the binding of the opponent’s sword, followed by a great variety of actions, among them many grips.

Some other interesting German fencing treatises will follow during the XIV and XV century, mostly about the two-hand sword, up to the XVI century, when the prevalence of the Italian School will be already well established, and the German school will be almost abandoned.

But also in last centuries of the Middle Ages Italy had been very active in this field: since the XIII century the Bolognese School was well known and appreciated in the rest of Europe.

Even if we don’t have the names of single masteres that thaught in Bologna in that century, we have the names of three (!) Italian masters that were present in Paris in the year 1292: Master Tommaso, Master Nicolò and Master Filippo.

In the following century we find the first names of Bolognese masters: Master Rosolino was teaching in 1338, Master Francesco in 1354, Master Nerio in 1385.

In 1410 Master Fiore dei Liberi, born in Cividale del Friuli, was living and teaching in Ferrara (in the region of Emilia).

That town, one of the most splendid courts of the period, was destined to become home to some of the most popular authors of knightly poems of the Italian Renaissance, like Boiardo, writer of the “Orlando Innamorato” and Ariosto, author of the “Orlando Furioso”.

After an adventurous life, spent among several wars, journeys and the learning of fencing from both Italian and German masters, the old Master Fiore, upon request by

his Lord, accepted to write a book, the most ancient Italian fencing treatise that seems to have survived, the *Flos Duellatorum* (Flower of the Duellers).

We have three manuscripts that contain Fiore's work, one in Italy and two in the U.S., and each one presents many differences from the others, so we can presume that each copist, probably an expert fencer himself, made some changes to the original text.

The book is mainly composed by drawings that illustrate the different fencing techniques, each one matched by some verses.

In the Italian manuscript, named *Codice Pisani-Dossi*, the text is often limited to a couple of verses, that probably had to be learned by heart by the students, specially the illiterate ones.

In the two U.S. manuscripts the text is more extended and clear, and it permits to clarify several techniques that are rather obscure in the Italian manuscript.

Master Fiore puts at the beginning of his work the warning that it is impossibile to remember all the techniques without a book, and that there cannot be a good "scholar" without a book, and even less, obviously, a good Master.

So we have some evidence that writing fencing books for the students was a well established tradition already in Master Fiore's times, even if we have to remind to the reader that before the invention of the press all those books were in just one copy, hand-written, and probably most of them are definitely lost.

The "school subjects" in Master Fiore's school were wrestling, unarmed defence against the dagger, dagger combat, some techniques with sticks and staffs, pike fencing, one-hand sword and mostly two-hand sword, a weapon born in the XIII century as an answer to the introduction of plate armour, and very popular among knights in that period.

In fact *Fiore dei Liberi* dedicates a part of the book also to armoured combat with the two-hand sword, armoured fight with the pole-axe, mounted combat with the lance, the sword and even bare-handed, techniques to be executed with the dagger against an opponent armed with a sword and viceversa, sword unsheathing techniques, etc. In short, he supplies us a complete martial instruction and, frankly speaking, a high level one, including concepts that today are the basis of modern sport fencing like "distance", "time", half-time or "mezzo tempo", "parry and riposte".

It is worth mentioning what are the basic virtues of the fencer for the Friulan Master: *celeritas*, *fortitudo*, *audacia*, *prudentia* (quickness, strength, courage and prudence), virtues that are somewhat in opposition between them, and between which one must find an equilibrium.

The next treatise available to us is the one that we offer hereby to the reader, in the first English edition ever presented to the public, the "*De arte gladiatoria dimicandi*" of Master Filippo Vadi from Pisa, written for the Duke Guidobaldo da Montefeltro between 1482 and 1487.

Be it sufficient for the moment to say that between Vadi's treatise and *Fiore dei Liberi*'s one there are so many similarities that we have to presume that the Pisan Master had the possibility to see the teachings of *Fiore dei Liberi*, by means either of a copy of his book or of the teachings of some master coming from *Fiore*'s tradition.

Meanwhile, during the XV century the Bolognese School appear to have been led by Master Filippo (or Lippo) di Bartolomeo Dardi.

We have evidence of him and his school since 1413.

Besides being a fencing master, this eclectic figure was an Astrologer (and consequently an Astronomer, as there was no difference at that time), a Mathematician, and from the year 1434 he was also Geometry Professor at Bologna University, the oldest University in Europe.

Dardi obtained that title for having written a book (now lost) about the relation between fencing and geometry.

This literate fencer died in 1464, leaving behind him a heir like Master Guido Antonio Di Luca.

A reknown fencing master, “from which school more warriors came out than from the belly of the Troyan Horse”, Di Luca taught how to fight, for example to the famous mercenary commander, the “condottiero” Giovanni de’ Medici, better known as Giovanni dalle Bande Nere, as well as to the most famous of the Italian Renaissance fencing masters, the bolognese Achille Marozzo.

In 1509, in the same city of Urbino where Vadi had teached, the Spanish Master Pietro Moncio, also known as Monte or Monti, was writing his long treatise in Latin. Monte taught fencing at the court of Urbino, specially to the Duke Guidubaldo, and he was celebrated by the famous writer Baldassarre Castiglione in his book “Il Cortegiano” (The Courtier”) as a perfect gentleman and knight.

Some copies of such treatise, for many years believed to be definitely lost, have been recently discovered.

Another student of Di Luca was the popular fencing master Achille Marozzo, General Master at Arms in Bologna, who taught fencing with one hand cut-and-thrust sword, sword and dagger, sword and buckler, sword and target, sword and round target, sword and palvese, sword and cloak, Bolognese dagger, Bolognese dagger and cloak, two hand-sword, pike, partisan bill, long pole-axe, defence against the dagger etc.

He wrote a treatise, the “Opera Nova”, that was destined to be re-printed many times during the XVI century and to be considered the symbol of the Italian school that would dominate the continent, almost unchallenged, for the following centuries.

## 2 – The “Arte gladiatoria dimicandi” by Filippo Vadi

The treatise “De arte gladiatoria dimicandi”, today kept at the National Library of Rome, was written between 1482 and 1487 by Filippo Vadi, a Master at arms from Pisa, and by him dedicated to the Duke Guidubaldo of Urbino, a valiant and unlucky “concottiero”.

Guidubaldo became Duke in 1482, so the text cannot be older.

On the other side, the book was included in the catalogue of the Ducal Library of Urbino, made between 1482 and 1487 by Odasio, the teacher of the young Duke, at the number 654, so it cannot have been written after 1487.

We don’t have any other evidence of the presence of Vadi at Urbino’s Court, but the dedication to the Duke and the presence of the manuscript in the Ducal Library must convince us that Vadi had lived at least for a period in that town, and that he taught fencing to Guidubaldo.

Again in the catalogue of the library we can find the note that the book have never been found again after the conquest of the town by Cesare Borgia in 1502.

Nothing we know of the following story of the manuscript, until it was bought by the Italian National Library.

We like to believe that the book could have been found interesting by the warlike Duke “Valentino” (Cesare Borgia) or by some of his military commanders, and that this is the reason why it disappeared from the Library of Urbino.

A partial publication of Vadi's treatise, commented from a philological but not from a technical point of view, has found its place in the beautiful book of Bascetta about medieval sports (see Bibliography), where it is possible to find the transcription of all the textual part, in Italian, and only a few paintings.

As we have written before, the great similarity between the treatise of the Pisan Master and the *Flos Duellatorum* makes us think that Vadi could have had access in some way to the teachings that Master Fiore wrote more than seventy years before.

However, the text by our author is quite different from a simple re-proposition of traditional teachings, and in many aspects it foreshadows the birth of that purely Italian school that during the Renaissance overwhelmed the old German school. One of the new elements introduced for the very first time by Filippo Vadi, as far as we know, is the part of the treatise made up exclusively of text, without illustrations, a solution that would become very popular in the following century.

In fact in many Renaissance treatises the text becomes always the most important part for the comprehension of the techniques and the principles contained in the treatise.

Mostly in the first treatises of the century, the ones written by Masters of the Bolognese School, illustrations are either completely missing, or they have a function of pure support of the textual part.

In the first treatise of the XVI century, by the Italianised Spaniard Pietro Monte, published in 1509 but written at the end of the XV century, also in the town of Urbino, there are no illustration at all.

The same we can say for the treatise by Antonio Manciolino (there are a couple of purely decorative drawings, with no relation at all with the techniques), and in Achille Marozzo's treatise illustrations show just the guards and the weapons whose use is treated in the text.

The textual part of the “*Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi*” is made of an introduction in prose and 16 chapters in verses.

In the introduction, after having dedicated the treatise to the Duke Guidubaldo, Vadi introduces himself in way very similar to Fiore dei Liberi, saying that he has studied the science of combat for a long time and with many masters, and that he has decided to write a treatise not to let the art disappear.

He also recommends not to let the knowledge contained in it in the hands of ignorant and rough men, but to communicate them only to nobles and knights.

Vadi, moreover, refers that he has put into the treatise only effective techniques, seen in action and approved personally by him (a concept that is apparently obvious, but unfortunately it is not always respected in modern martial arts).

Fencing develops from the missing of natural weapons in the human race, which, to survive, had to make use of its only true weapon: rational intelligence, of which fencing, as a geometrical science, is a daughter.

That's why the science of fencing permits to a weaker individual to submit even a stronger and more athletic opponent, because this discipline teaches how to defend, how to attack and how to disarm the opponent in the quickest and most efficient way.

After that Vadi, having reaffirmed his intention to preserve the memory of this art, and having exposed his long martial curriculum, expresses his intention to treat only some kinds of weapons: pike, two-hand sword, dagger and pole-axe, of which only the sword will find place in textual part, while the other weapons will be examined by our Author only in the illustrated part.

Finally, one more time the Pisan Master recommends to divulgate the art only among men that have the responsibility to rule the State and defend the weak.

Very important, and unfortunately very rare in the history of fencing (in which every master consider himself the only keeper of the truth), is the declaration that ends the introduction, in which Vadi gives to the reader, if he's expert in the art of combat, a previous permission to make variations to the book, adding and quitting techniques.

The first chapter, "Incipit" (beginning) treats of the fact that fencing belongs to the family of the sciences, like geometry, and not to the world of the arts, comparing it to music (also considered a science in a late medieval and Renaissance vision).

The second chapter, "Misura de spada da doi mane" (measure of the two-hand sword) illustrates the measure that the two-hand sword must have, an indication that has a great importance for all the people that want to restore the science of fencing of those times, or even for historical re-enactement.

The reader should note that it has no sense to change the measures given by Vadi (for example the total length of the two hand sword, that must go from the ground up to the armpit of the fencer) in precise metrical measures: the real measures of the sword must be different according to the person that will use it and his physical characteristics (except in a duel, where the two swords must be identical between themselves, i.e. both of the measure that the defied part prefers).

The following chapter, the third, "Ragion de spada" (the discourse of the sword), treats the utility of fencing and the ethical and practical principles that must lead the fencer: this is a key chapter of the work.

The chapter illustrates several advices and several techniques of "gioco largo" (wide play, i.e. techniques executed at long or medium distance, that does not foresee grips on the opponent's body, but can include kicks, grips on his sword etc.) and "gioco stretto" (close play, essentially grips, techniques including wrestling or anyhow techniques at very short distance).

For a detailed analysis of the techniques see the Technical Appendix.

The sword, in the first verses, is defined "royal weapon", a weapon that must be handled in a manly way, a consideration that reminds what have been said on the opportunity of restraining the art of fencing to nobles and knights.

From a technical point of view, it is worth considering how the Author resumes the whole art in the crossing of the swords, i.e. in the "cross parry" that blocks the enemy's blow with a counter-cut (and not with a stable cross parry like in modern sabre fencing, that may not have enough power to stop a strong blow), and from which a great number of techniques may start, and first of all the "parry and risposte". This same concept is repeated later on: "gioca de croce e non serai conquiso": play with the cross and you will not be conquered.

Again, interesting are the verses in which the basic concept of time and measures are mentioned, or the ones in which it is stated that "ingegno ogni possanza sforza" (cunning wins any strength).

In the second part of the chapter one can find several moral indications, even more interesting, whose analysis we present here below.



Among them are the prohibition to pick quarrels and to fight against justice, the respect due to the Master, the loyalty towards legitimate authorities and so on. From a technical point of view, we underline that our Author advises who wants to become an expert swordsman not only to learn, but even to make teaching experiences, always taking care to free himself from his own mistakes. Finally, our Author speaks of the intrinsic virtues of the noble art of fencing, an art that hunts the cowardice out of the heart, and gives happiness by its own virtue, and always accompanies the ones that dedicate themselves to it, preserving them from poverty and taking them back to the light when they feel like an extinguished fire: the discipline of fencing is like a loyal partner that's always there for its followers. The last verses are dedicated to a proud revindication of the innovations that the Pisan Master brought to the science of sword handling.

The fourth chapter, without a title, is dedicated to the importance of the art of the sword and to the advantages that it offers to the ones that dedicate themselves to it.

Strangely enough, the first advantages of the practice of fencing that our Author names are of an almost aesthetical nature: it teaches how to walk well (sense of equilibrium, elasticity of the step, good gait) and it makes the eye quick, brave and lord-like.

Then we pass to more concrete advantages: one can learn to parry well, and therefore to defend his own life: many people that did not want to learn this science of defence have died in a violent way. There is no greater good than life (a concept, this, typically western, stranger to other martial cultures), that's why the importance of the knowledge of the art of personal defence, which may save your life a thousand times, is much higher than the importance of any material wealth.

In fact, even if you don't look for trouble, it is easy to find yourself in a quarrel that may end in a violent way, and in this case it is better to be able to prevail over other people.

From this comes the need to learn the new art discovered by Vadi, and in particular to learn how to measure the fencing times, in order not to give to your Master a reason to complain about you.

When you have to fight (in a duel) with someone, it is necessary to pay attention that the swords are identical, without giving any advantage to the opponent.

Then we find another list of virtues that the fencer has to develop: a swift eye, knowledge, rapidity, strength and a firm heart (*buon occhio, sapere, prestezza, forza e cuore*).

Notwithstanding what stated before on the opportunity that the swords used in a duel must be identical, our Author tells us that for a big man it is more convenient to use a long sword and for a little man a short sword.

The strength of the big man can break the guard of the little man, shifting his sword with violence, but knowledge can compensate this disadvantage of the little man.

In fact, one that knows many blows is very dangerous, while a man that knows just a few of them will act with great strain and disadvantage, and at the end he will be overcome, even if he's stronger.

By consequence of this, it is dangerous to reveal the secrets of the art, mostly to people that you don't know well.

It is very dangerous to fight against an opponent armed with a longer sword, that's why in a duel it is necessary to pretend to use identical weapons.

To the said considerations Vadi adds a declaration of exclusive love for the two-hand sword: “La spada da doi mane sola stimo e quella adopro a mia bisogna” (only the two-hand sword I esteem, and I use it for all my needs).

Finally, the Pisan Master advises not to fight against more than one opponent, and in case you are forced to do it, he invites to use a very light weapon and to avoid the use of the thrust.

As we have seen, we find here a quite messy miscellaneous of precious advices and principles, many of which we'll find again later on.

The fifth chapter, “de punte e tagli”, (of thrusts and cuts) describes in brief the seven basic blows, that are quite similar to Fiore dei Liberi's one, even if some have here a different name.

This same subject is treated again in a more extended way in the following chapter, the sixth: “li sette colpi della spada” (the seven blows of the sword).

The brief chapter seven “de la punta” (of the thrust) is dedicated to the thrusts, described as “velenosi” (venomous) as they are very insidious and often deadly, while the eighth “costione di tagli e punte” (the dispute of cuts and thrusts) presents us a kind of polemic discussion between cuts and thrusts to decide which blow is the best.

The Pisan Master illustrates here mostly the disadvantages of the thrust (even if before he had defined it as full of venom): any parry, even the most feeble, is good enough to deviate a thrust, on the contrary a cut must be opposed with strength. Moreover, if the thrust does not hit it loses any utility and it cannot menace the opponent anymore.

Finally, against more than one opponent it is not advisable to use the thrust, because when it hits, if it is not withdrawn with great swiftness, it makes the fencer vulnerable to any attack from any of the other attackers.

So we don't agree with an interpretation that makes of Vadi an apostle of the thrust against the more “archaic” Fiore dei Liberi, seen as a paladin of the fendente cut.

The Master from Friuli, in fact, makes much use of the thrusts, while Vadi sees clearly its limits and defects.

However, it is possible to sustain that Filippo Vadi puts more emphasis, in general, on swift and insidious blows, little charged (not only the thrusts, but mostly the false edge blows going upwards), in comparison with the often more powerful cuts of the Flos Duellatorum.

Coherently with what we have just said, the chapter ends with a note in favour of the light and handy weapons against the heavy ones, in particular if one has to confront several opponents.

Chapter nine tells us “de la croce” (of the cross). We believe that the subject here is the cross-parry or “incrosar” (crossing) mentioned both by Vadi and by Fiore dei Liberi (see also the Glossary of the Technical Appendix), but it may also be possible that the reference is to the family of guards named “di croce” (of the cross), in which you should keep your left hand on the blade of the sword, and which can be used for several good cross parries (see for example Pag. 26v of the Manuscript, pic. 1: the accent on the stability and the trustfulness of the cross may be seen as a reference to the “reinforcement” supplied by the left hand on the blade).

Chapter ten “ragione di mezza spada” (discourse of the half-sword) introduces us to the “gioco di mezza spada” (play of half-sword), the most important part of the “gioco largo”, derived from a crossing of the blades more or less at half of the length

of the blades themselves, in which one of the duellers has attacked, the other has parried, presumably without moving his feet or moving it just a little, and the two find themselves in short distance, but still not to the grips (in this last case it would be called "gioco stretto").

Here Master Vadi shows us some methods to arrive to the half-sword play, or even to the grips, and he also indicates a kind of footwork that according to him is innovative, in which you have to flex the knee of the advanced leg and extend the leg behind, as shown also by Marozzo, like in a modern lunge, but generally shorter. Vadi attributes to himself the discovery of this "passeggiar" (footwork), and we must recognize that in the *Flos Duellatorum* in general the steps are shorter and the back leg only in a few illustrations seems to be extended.

We know that for Fiore the steps were the "passare", or full step, in which you bring ahead the foot that was behind like in normal walking, and the "acrescer", in which you advance with the foot that is already forward. In this case but the back foot follows like in modern normal fencing steps, and it does not stay firm like in Vadi's footwork and in the modern lunge.

An interesting technical consideration is the advice to throw cuts charged with a rotating motion, i.e. with a moulinet (stramazzone), only if they're very brief and with the sword always held directly in front of the face, never bringing it too far away from the line of attack.

In the following chapter, number eleven, "ragion de gioco de spada" (discourse of the sword play), the discourse about close combat goes on, and we immediately find the advice to make the feints in a quick and short way, never bringing the sword too far from the line, in order to be able to call it back to the defence without delay. This advice is followed by several technical indications, among them the footwork to be used with the different parries, and a warning against the half-time blows (see Glossary of the Technical Appendix) that the opponent may throw.

Chapter twelve, "ragion de' viste de spada" (discourse of the feints of the sword) treats of the feints, in particular in half-sword play. Vadi states that the feints are used to deceive the opponent, not letting him understand to which part you want to throw your real attack, but he complains that he cannot be so clear with words as he would be sword in hand.

In the thirteen chapter, "ragione de mezza spada" (discourse of the half-sword), we go back to the discourse on the techniques to be used at middle-short distance.

Worth noting is the emphasis on the use of thrusts or false edge cuts from below, more than on the traditional "fendente" downwards blows.

At the end of the chapter there is a recommendation to always calculate well the right time for any action, remembering to the reader to always respect one of the basic principles of fencing: time.

The fourteenth chapter, "ragion di mezzo tempo de spada" (discourse of the sword's half-time) continues the discourse about time, speaking of the half-time blows (blows thrown in the middle of the attack of the opponent, often to the arm or hand; they're blows that must hit much before the attacking movement is completed). Again Vadi complains because he cannot describe in a clear way this action only with words, without the possibility to show it physically, and he limits to insist on the speed that those blows must have, and on the need that they must be thrown only with a

quick movement of the wrist, and with right measure (here we find another of the basic principles of fencing: measure).

In the half-time blows it is essential to hit the opponent at an advanced target as soon as that target is taken forward by the opponent and enters into the sword's range (into measure).

If the half-time blow is thrown out of measure it is useless, as it would not hit the target, while if it is thrown when the opponent's attack is already too close, there would be the risk to be hit anyhow, as the attack has not been stopped in time. Moreover, in this last case, there could not be enough time to take the sword back to parry, or to avoid the attack moving away.

In the second part of the chapter, Vadi glorifies as the best jewel of art a mysterious action called the "volarica", of which we can only deduct some characteristics.

Beyond any doubt, it is a blow to the head, as "rompe con bon filo l'altrui cervello" (it breaks with its good – or true? - edge the other's brain), and it should also be a half-time blow, as it is treated in this chapter.

Finally, it parries and hurts at the same time (as Marozzo says that false edge parries do).

Chapter fifteen, "ragion di spada contra la rota" (discourse of the sword against the rota) tells us how to react facing an opponent that attacks with a repeated moulinet move. In the second part of the chapter we can find an offensive technique against an opponent that waits for us in the guard called "porta di ferro" (Iron Door).

Finally, we arrive to the last chapter, entitled "ammaestramento di spada" (the teachings of the sword), in which we can find a resume of the basic fencing principles (not only of Vadi's fencing method, but also of rational fencing in general) that we have already found in all the other chapters, often applied to particular techniques. First of all, the author's attention is applied to self-defence, the defence of that greatest good of all that is life: the sword must be most of all like a big shield ("targone", in Italian) that covers the whole body of the fencer.

So the sword should never go too far from the body that it must defend, be it making guards or making blows ("facendo guardie né ferir"), so neither the guard positions nor the blows thrown during combat should bring the sword so far that it cannot run back to the defence.

By consequence of this, but also in order to have more possibilities to hit, the route of the sword should be as short as possible.

Moreover, it is good that the point of the sword is always facing the opponent, and in particular his face (for combat psychology reasons: a thrust to the face is much more scaring than one to the trunk, although the two are equally deadly).

All the techniques, so, will be executed keeping the sword in front of the fencer, between himself and his opponent, and the blows will not be much charged, as already indicated in chapter X.

Actually, a quick examination of Filippo Vadi's guards, in comparison for example to Flos Duellatorum's ones, permits us to verify that the main characteristic of Vadi's guards is to keep the point much more towards the opponent, with the sword always between the fencer and his opponent.

The last advice of the Pisan Master, with which he takes his leave from the reader, is to use as often as possible half-time blows, stopping the opponent's blows as soon as they begin to take form, with swift cuts to the hands.

It is worth noting as in Vadi's treatise the textual part treats either of fencing in general or of the two-hand sword handling, disregarding the use of any other weapon.

We'll see that the other weapons typical of the period are more sintetically treated in the second part of the book the illustrated one.

However, it is evident that Vadi favours the teaching of the two-hand sword over the other weapons, that are limited to a very reduced space or disappear completely, like also unarmed wrestling and mounted combat do.

In practice the only weapon that is treated with attention apart from the two-hand sword is the dagger, also in the form of personal defence with bare hands against a dagger assault (a science that could result of great utility in the courts of the period, according to the chronicles).

We have to underline that this is an indication of a trend that would grow with time and that, with some exceptions, will cause a metamorphosis in the Italian martial artist, from the warlike and eclectic knight of Fiore dei Liberi (who can handle equally well any kind of weapon both mounted and on foot, wrestles, defends himself with the dagger against the sword and viceversa, fights with any stick or staff that he comes to have at hand, etc...) to the fencer specialised in one or two kinds of combat (in the late Renaissance usually single sword, sword and dagger, or sword and cloak).

The second part of the treatise has a more traditional structure, with the different martial techniques illustrated by means of pictures and a brief explicative comment made up of a couple of verses, like in the old German tradition that goes from the I33 Manuscript to the Fechtbuch by Talhofer, just to name a few, a tradition maintained in Italy by Fiore Dei Liberi and partly by our Author.

It has been hypotesized that the poetic form of the few verses that go together with the pictures of the Flos Duellatorum and Vadi's treatise can indicate that they were meant to be learned by heart, and maybe recitated during lessons, being the techniques directed mainly to an illiterate public.

In favour of this ipothesis one can note that many verses are similar in Vadi and in Fiore dei Liberi (mostly the Pisani Dossi version).

However, the text of the verses of both Vadi and the Pisani Dossi manuscript of the Flos Duellatorum is often not very useful in order to understand the illustrated technique, and in these cases it could hardly help in remembering the technique itself.

Moreover, Fiore dei Liberi clearly states that it is impossible to know and to remeber many techniques without a book, so every good "scholar" and "magistro" must own a book.

Notwithstanding this, if a diffused literacy (at least in the knightly class) could be the real situation at the Court of Ferrara during Master Fiore's times, and even more at the splendid Court of Urbino of Vadi's times, not necessarily the same was true in other places, or for earlier generations.

It is possible to presume that some "books" were made only by pictures (in many German treatises the text is even more reduced that in the Pisani Dossi manuscript), and that Masters taught verses to be learned by heart to accompany each drawing. Finally, rithm and rhime, generally speaking, were discovered also to help memorization, so this ipothesis cannot be excluded.

In comparison with the *Flos duellatorum* we can note that clothes and armour of Vadi's fighters seem to be more recent, typical of the second half of the XV century, reflecting the variations that took place in costume and armour during the seventy years that passed between the two treatises.

Even from the technical point of view there are evident similarities with the *Flos Duellatorum*, but also some aspects that link Vadi to the following Italian Masters: wrestling is not treated, while the treatise is dedicated almost exclusively to the two-hand sword and the dagger, the guard positions never keep the point of the sword far from the line of attack, while Fiore dei Liberi charges more his blows, and so on. In particular Master Fiore almost always comes to the half sword and to the grips after a cross-parry, while both Vadi and Marozzo often approach with a false edge cut or a thrust from below, and both make much use of the feint to open the way for a grip.

The first illustration that we find, at page 15r of the manuscript, is a man that takes a two-hand sword in a kind of "stand at ease" position (the same position in which we'll see Filippo Vadi himself, at the following page), surrounded by different symbolic figures.

The illustration reminds the one at page 17A of the *Flos Duellatorum* (Pisani Dossi manuscript), in which four animals symbolize the opposed physical and moral virtues that a knight must own: the Strength of the Elephant (with a firm Tower on his back), the Celerity of the Tiger (represented, however, like a Greyhound that brings an arrow), the Bravery of the Lion (that shows his courageous heart) and the Prudence of the Deer-wolf (represented as a spotted feline, maybe a Leopard, that keeps a sextant, symbol of calculation).

Note that we have here in the same person the same dichotomy of virtues that we find in the *Chanson de Roland*, between the "prouesse" of Roland and the "sagesse" of his comrade Olivier.

Vadi, instead, gives to his symbols a more technical and concrete meaning, as we'll see in detail, given the particular interest that this illustration has for the understanding of our Author's work.

Over the head of the fencer we see a star-like figure, that according to the text is a sextant, and that once again, like in the *Flos Duellatorum*, symbolizes the rational calculation of time and distance that should guide any action:

"Io sono un sexto che fo partimenti  
O scrimitore ascolta mia ragione  
Cusì misura el tempo simelmente."

(I am a sextant, that divides,  
Oh fencer, do my reason hear  
Time you will measure in the same way)

Lower, to the left, in place of the fencer's heart, we find an eye, that symbolizes the fact that the heart must be not only brave, but also watchful and prudently full of cunning (we find again, here, the theme of "audacia et prudentia"):

"L'ochio col cor vole star atento  
Ardito e pieno di providimento".

(The eye with heart watchful will be  
He's brave and he's of prudence full)

At this point from the virtues of the mind and of the heart we pass to the limbs, that have to put in practice the said principles by means of a physical action.

Over the right shoulder we see the head of a bear, and just like an attacking bear the shoulder has to turn:

“Il natural de l’orso si è el girare  
In qua in là in su in giù andare  
Cusì conviene che tua spalla faccia  
Poi la tua spada fa che metti in caccia.”

(The bear’s nature is to turn  
Here, there, down, up to go  
The same your shoulder should here do  
Then to the hunt you’ll send your sword.)

Pushed by the shoulder, the next part of the body that should act is the right hand, similar to a snake (but it is a dragon that appears in the illustration), that must be as brave in attacking as prudent in not exposing itself and not bringing the sword too far from the body, keeping it always ready to come back to the defence:

“La man dirita vol eser prudente  
Ardita e mortal cum un serpente”

(Cautious the right hand be  
Lethal and brave such as a snake)

Please note that we find again here the opposed virtues of prudence and courage. Different is the function of the left arm, from which shoulder we see a ram coming out, ready to clash with any attack of the enemy:

“Io so un muntone e sto sempre a mirare  
Che per natura sempre voglio cozare  
Così convien tuo taglio sia inginioso  
Sempre parar quando serà resposo”.

(I am a ram, I’m always looking,  
That by my nature I want to butt,  
So your cut’d better be so cunning,  
I’ll always parry when you answer.)

So we come to the left hand, that should be as quick as a greyhound, in order to be used for the grips and to take the blade of the fencer’s sword and make “gioco stretto” techniques (for ex. See the ones at page 18r pic. 2 and page 20v pic. 1 e 2):

“Con la man stanca la spada ò per punta  
Per far ferire d’ezza quando serà giunta  
E se tu voi sto ferire sia intero  
Fa che sia presto como levorero.”

(With my left hand I take my point  
To hurt with her when it’ll arrive  
And if you want this blow complete  
Make that it’s quick like a greyhound.)

Now let’s see the lower limbs, where we find very useful indications about which was the kind of footwork used by our Master from Tuscany.

At the knee level we find a pair of keys, with verses both to the left and to the right:

“E chi queste chiave cum seco non averà  
A questo giuoco poca guerra farà.”

“Le gambe chiave se po’ ben diri  
Per che li ti serra e anche ti po’ aprire”

(And who these keys with him won’t have

In this game not much war will bring  
The legs can justly keys be called,  
As they can close and they can open.)

So the legs will open and close, changing distance and measure.

But coming now to the feet, we see that besides the right foot there is a drawing representing the sun, and like the sun the right foot must often come back, turning, to the place from where it first moved (for example in order to go back out of hitting measure after throwing an attack):

“Tu vedi el sol che fa gran giramento  
E donde el nasce fa suo tornamento  
Il pé com el sol va convien che torni  
Se voii ch’el giuoco toa persona adorni.”

(You see the sun that great turn makes  
Where it was born it will return,  
And like the sun may foot come back  
If with your play honour you want.)

The left foot, on the contrary, mostly if it stays back, behind the right one, as it is generally advisable during an offensive action, must remain firm and give stability, as a safe castle:

“El pié stanco ferma senza paura  
Como rocha fa che sia costante  
E poii la tua persona serà tuta sicura.”

(Left foot you must stop without fear  
Firm should it be just like a rock  
Then fully safe your body is.)

Between the two feet, finally, it is represented a wheel, that tells us of a different kind of footwork, circular, that our author advises mostly from a defensive point of view:

“Quandi i pié o l’uno o l’altro fa molesta  
Como rota da molin dia volta presta  
Bixogna esser il cor providitore  
C(he – testo abraso -) luj s’aspetta vergogna e l’onore.”

(When he’ll attack to either foot  
Like wheel of mill it has to turn.

It is the heart’s that’s to be watchful  
As shame and honour on him depend.)

The following pictures shows the seven blows of the sword, similar to Fiore dei Liberi’s ones, except for the fact that the Sotani of the Master from Friuli are called Rota, while the Mezani become Volanti.

Also the verses that accompany the illustration are very similar.

However, we know from the text that many blows that in the Flos Duellatorum were made with the true edge, are made here with the false edge.

Vadi, moreover, wants to put into evidence that he couldn’t represent blows of a basic importance like the half-time blows.

Then we find the “portrait” of Filippo Vadi, an athletic man dressed in black, followed by the 12 guards of the two hand sword (page 16 and 17 of the manuscript).

Many of those guards have the same name and/or are identical to Fiore dei Liberi’s ones, others are new, but it is evident that there must be some relation between the two Masters.



For a detailed analysis of the guards please see the Technical Appendix, here it will be sufficient to indicate that the main difference between the two is that Maestro Fiore often uses guards that permit to throw a strong blow, Vadi adopts very “closed” guards, with the point of the sword never far from the line of attack, coherently with his fencing principles.

After the 12 guards we have twenty-five techniques of the two-hand sword, mainly in “gioco stretto” (close play).

Also here it is evident the similarity, and sometimes the identity, between these techniques and the ones of the Friulan Master.

In “gioco stretto” the techniques used by Vadi belong entirely to the tradition, one cannot find any innovation like the ones found in the textual part of the treatise, in “gioco largo”.

However, we cannot avoid to point out that while in the Flos Duellatorum the techniques are exposed in an order that makes sense (in each part of the treatise the techniques come out from the crossing of swords that precedes them), in Vadi’s treatise the two-hand sword techniques have been exposed without any order, without showing the position from which they start, and the interpretation would often be difficult, if we didn’t have some help from the Flos Duellatorum.

At page 24r of the manuscript we find some guards and techniques for the pole-axe play, in full armour, followed by guards and techniques for the two-hand sword also in full armour, and finally the illustration of the particular kind of sword to be used in such combat.

Here the similarity with the Flos Duellatorum is even more clear, and Vadi uses the same exposing principle of Fiore, for which the various techniques follow the same parry.

The only difference worth a brief comment is a bizarre innovation, exclusively terminological (a case not rare at all in the history of fencing), for the guards of the two-hand sword in armour: the family of the “cross” guards is turned into the family of the “leopard” guards, maybe thinking to oppose them to the “snake” guards.

Curiously, in the pole-axe guards we find the “guardia di croce” (cross-guard) with its traditional name, instead that with the new name “posta di coda di leopardo” (leopard’s tail guard).

The innovation, we presume, didn’t find any enthusiasm among the public, as we don’t find it in any other text.

After the two-hand sword in armour, at page 28, we find the pike play, also similar (but shorter and with some more ambiguity, see Technical Appendix) to Fiore dei Liberi’s one.

Finally, from pic. 1 of page 29r, our Author begins to treat the dagger and the unarmed defence against the dagger, an art to which he will dedicate much space, and for whose study Vadi’s treatise is very important.

The dagger used by Vadi and Fiore dei Liberi is a weapon that is sharp, but whose main use is the thrust, both with the so-called hammer grip and with the screwdriver grip (sopramano and sottomano, in Italian).

Even if at a first sight the techniques seem to be fully traditional, with the usual exposing technique for which from a parry/grip all the deriving techniques will follow, a more detailed analysis reveals to us some innovative aspects.

First of all in the Flos Duellatorum and in general in medieval treatises the main attack was “sopramano”, downwards from above, with the hammer-grip, an attack

typical of street and court killers, deadly if it hits the target but rough and predictable, and which requires that the attacker moves very close to the victim.

In Vadi it has much more space the more insidious and fencing-like attack “sottomano”, with the screwdriver grip, much quicker and which permits to hit without having to move too close to the opponent.

By consequence, also many defences pertain more to the world of fencing than to the one of wrestling.

We’ll see that later on, in the Opera Nova of the Bolognese Master Achille Marozzo, there will be a total separation between the traditional dagger grips, used against a rough and probably treacherous attack, often “sopramano” (see the Dagger Grips at the end of Book V of the Opera Nova), and a situation of dagger duel in which each of the two opponents keeps the dagger exclusively “sottomano”, and uses it to wound the opponent to the hands or the face with quick cuts and thrusts.

At the end of this section (but soon we’ll find again the art of the dagger), Vadi shows the form and the measure of the dagger.

After that, there is a technique executed with two sticks against a pike attack, similar to the one shown in the Flos Duellatorum, but simpler and easier to make, and then two paintings that illustrate how to take position to make a parry against the throwing of a javelin.

Finally, the work ends with some other dagger techniques, mostly defences against a killer that has a grip on his victim and prepares to hit him with the dagger (but there is also a defence with the sword against a killer armed with the dagger).

In these last techniques one can always find both the starting position and the final outcome, but we don’t find the usual comment in verses.

### 3 – A fencer and a knight: Vadi’s ethics and practical wisdom

As we have seen, in the part made of the treatise of only text, we find also the knightly and martial ethics of Filippo Vadi.

We find, mixed up in a unified vision, high moral principles and a practical wisdom derived from a long experience of life’s cases and, we’d say, of a certainly turbulent life, as it used to be the life of a master at arms in the warlike and insidious Italian courts of the end of the XV century.

We’ll see just a few important points.

- Don’t teach fencing to people not belonging to the class of nobles and knights (in the introduction in prose that precedes the part in verses). This seems to be a topic, as we find it also in the Flos Duellatorum, not missing a good dose of elitism, for which the commons are described as brutes, with bodies without any dexterity and useful only to lift wheights.

This comment, from the other hand, provides us with the practical indication that a body accustomed to lift and transport heavy wheights loses agility and is not indicated for fencing.

In fact we see that the fencers that both Fiore dei Liberi and Vadi show in the illustrations have athletic but not herculeous bodies, and even Strength, that is one of the virtues pursued by Fiore dei Liberi and Vadi, does not seem to be the kind of strength that characterises the modern culturist.

The same concept we find in Pietro Monte’s treatise.

From a moral point of view, it is important to note that both in Fiore dei Liberi and in Vadi, nobility of birth coincides with moral nobility, and there is no distinction between the two concepts (a distinction that, on the contrary, will appear very clear in the Renaissance, for example for Achille Marozzo).

In fact, where Vadi repeats this prescription, he immediately links it to the concept that the arts of combat must be taught only to the nobles and the knights because they must take care of two duties of basic importance: to rule the State and to defend the helpless ones (widows, orphans), according to the knightly ideals diffused for centuries by the Church (and often, unfortunately, ignored by many knights).

The uncouth individuals, that pursue only their own interest with all the brutal means at their disposal, must have no possibility at all to learn the high geometrical and scientific doctrines that permit to the men with a noble and brave soul to prevail in any fight.

So, in modern terms, this precept can be seen as “don’t teach the science of combat to men that does not share noble and knightly ideals, like the defence of the weak people”.

Also, one must consider that the fight with sharp weapons was still one of the most advanced and deadly kinds of combat of the period, and a fundamental part of the military training of the warrior elite.

The same concept can be found where Vadi says that the practice of fencing permits to speak to princes and kings, as it is their duty to rule the State, to maintain justice and to defend the weak people, and so this science is dedicated to them.

- The virtues of the fencer: knowledge, strength, courage (Chapter 3): we find here again some virtues very much similar to the ones proposed by Fiore dei Liberi, and by him illustrated by means of the four animals: prudence, strength, courage, rapidity. Other virtues are enunciated at chapter 4: a good eye (that may correspond to the prudence of Maestro Fiore, mainly a good capacity of judgment and calculation), knowledge, quickness and strength.

So we see that the basic virtues of Fiore dei Liberi, even if illustrated in a less organic and picturesque way, can all be found in Vadi, with the adding of the quintessence that stands over the four elements: technical knowledge.

- Don’t play fencing with one that has a reason to hate you (Chapter 3).

Each time that you play fencing with someone you give him a knowledge that he may use some day in a real combat. More so, if he is a potential enemy.

In fact you are giving information, in particular, about how you would fight in a real combat for your life.

Moreover, there is another aspect that has to be taken into account: there could be the danger that the opponent, if he hates you, could try to really hurt you, without controlling the blows as one should do during training with blunts of steel. Later, he could always tell that it was an accident.

- You know your heart (mind, intention) not your comrade’s, never make use of this false fantasy (Chapter 3). Here Master Vadi alerts us against the presumption that we can guess other people’s intentions, an advice that is extremely valid from a technical point of view in fencing and combat (and how many times this kind of mistake can be found!), but also generally in life.

- Don’t fight against justice, and don’t try to give rise to fights (Chapter 3): A serie of verses shows us the opinion of Vadi on troublemakers, people who find how to fight a thousand times with a thousand people, but who will lose their reputation for just one

defeat, and so, believing that they stand tall bullying everyone, they put themselves at a very low level.

Here also the following two verses find their place, against people too ready to fight verbally: “Se la lingua tagliasse per ragione et fesse ancora lei como la spada, seria infinite morte le persone”. (If the tongue could cut and it was like the sword, infinite numbers of people would be dead).

We have here a nice “countermove” to the more famous “ferisce più la penna della spada” (the pen hurts more than the sword).

It is all too easy to make war with words, while real action requires much higher qualities of physical and moral courage.

The knowledge of life and the experience of war of Maestro Vadi bring him to refuse an intellectual homage to the force of the verbal or written word, in favour of action. This short aphorism of the Tuscan master at arms is expression of a cultural line typical of the courts of the great “condottieri” (mercenary military leaders) of Central Italy like the Montefeltro family from Urbino and the commander (then Duke) Braccio da Montone, a line that we’ll soon analyse with more attention.

But let’s go back to our main theme: far from the bullies that look for fights as we have described above, the good knight must fight only to defend himself according to justice, when, as written in chapter 4 “senza cercare si trova costione” (one finds a quarrel without having searched it), and it is for this purpose that the masters teach the art of combat

In fact “Chi vole senza ragion altrui offendere danna l’anima e il corpo certamente: fa al suo maestro vergogna prendere” (who wants to offend other people without a reason damns his own soul and his body without doubt: he makes his master be ashamed).

So the unfair actions of a scholar spread mud also over the honour of his master, who, in first place, couldn’t see in his scholar what made him unworthy to receive such a noble teaching, and then he couldn’t inspire in him the love for justice that could have done of him a good knight.

This thought brings us to speak more about the figure of the Master, according to the following verses of our author.

- The Master: respect and gratitude (Chapter 3): Vadi affirms that there is no reward that could pay the debt that links a scholar to his Master, and that a scholar’s gratitude must be eternal, because the Master has given him a gift who has no price. To understand completely such opinions, beyond the respect always due to any kind of teacher, one must consider that the teachings of a fencing Master were not only at a sportive and physical level, but they were an initiation to a “psico-physical” discipline, as it would be called today, a practice that involves not only the body but even the mind and the spirit of practitioners, i.e. the individual as a whole.

We’re talking of a discipline that aims to the construction of a warrior, a gentleman, a knight: the realization of a great ideal of human being, struggling to obtain the maximum development of his potential as an athlete, a soldier and a moral person. Moreover, on a more practical level, the Master gave to his scholar the knowledge needed to defend what the western culture has always considered one of the most important values: human life.

This theme is stated explicitly in Chapter 4, where the author reminds us that many people died because they did not want to learn the art of fighting (the sad destiny not only of many individuals, but also of many states).

Also, he writes that there is no greater good than life, whose defence is much more important than any material wealth: in the view of our knight only the defence of some higher ethical value (like justice, truth, honour, etc...) or the defence of the weak people can be worth such a risk.

Moreover, one should not forget that at that time life for a soldier depended heavily on his combat skills, that could be proved in whatever moment and by anybody.

To reveal and, more, to teach one's combat method could be very dangerous, as we find written in Chapter 4: "non palexare i secreti de l'arte che non sie offexo per cotal ragione" (don't reveal the secrets of art, not to get hurt for this reason).

The scholar of today could be the enemy of tomorrow (specially in such an uncertain world, with ephemeral alliances between the several tiny Italian states and many noble families), or he could unwittingly reveal the secrets of art to a future enemy.

In particular, many of the famous "secret blows" of which we find trace in literature, were effective only if unexpected by the opponent.

From this comes that the teaching of fencing meant for the teacher not only to dedicate to the scholar time and efforts, and to teach him a science of great utility, but also, in a very concrete sense, to put his own life in the scholar's hands: each time that the Master teaches to a scholar to defend himself from a kind of attack he takes a risk, renouncing to an eventual weapon against the scholar and giving such weapon to him.

- The gifts of fencing: fun, courage, wealth and honour (Chapter 3): fencing is a discipline that "rallegra il core" (makes one's heart merry), a discipline that creates great friendships and permits to know, to channel and to manage aggressiveness, without renouncing to it or repressing it.

Moreover, this practice permits to the fencer to have a confrontation with his own fears, to know his own reactions to a menace, helps him to get used to the idea of pain and death, giving him the gift of true courage, a courage that rises not from foolhardiness but on the contrary from knowledge and consciousness.

Finally, this art permits to obtain "thexoro e honore" (treasure and honour), keeping the practitioner in the grace of the political leaders and giving him the knowledge and skill to defend his own honour in any circumstances.

So this art never deserts her disciples, sustaining them, bringing them back to prosperity and comforting them when fortune is hostile to them.

- Never permit the opponent to take any advantage over you (Chapter 4). "Non dar vantaggio di spada a niuno, saresti a pericolo d'averne vergogna" (Never allow to anybody a sword advantage, you would be in danger to take shame for it): whoever allows an advantage (like a longer or lighter sword) to his opponent, for a wrongly understood sense of chivalry, or, even worse, for foolish bravery, could find himself in the condition to bitterly regret it, obtaining by his act not honour but the shame of a defeat.

We have here another no-nonsense advice that proves wrong a certain naive idea of the knight, seen like an ingenuous idealist, with an almost masochist behaviour.

- Don't fight, if possible, against more than one opponent at a time (Chapter 4): here we find again a simple no-nonsense advice, almost obvious for any serious practitioner.

However, it remains as a warning for some enthusiasts of the martial arts that are still convinced that one can learn how to defeat many opponents together thanks to some pre-defined combination of movements.

However, if it is not possible to avoid this unpleasant situation, that almost always brings to defeat, Vadi gives us some useful technical advice: we should use a light blade, that can be handled quickly and easily, and we should never thrust: when we are making a thrust it is impossible for us to use the sword to cover the body from the other opponents.

The same concept that the thrust is too dangerous in a fight against more than one opponent can be found later, in Chapter 8.

From this quick analysis we can put in evidence values coming out both from a high moral tradition and from a no-nonsense worldly wisdom, giving life to a practical philosophy for a man that wants to pursue good and virtue, living and surviving in this imperfect world.

The knight of Vadi moves in the world, and in the world he brings high as a banner his honour and his ideals, embodying them in his own life both with pride and prudent equilibrium.

#### 4 – Fencing is not an art but a true science

It is worth noting that Vadi puts just at the beginning of his book a long discussion on the fact that fencing is not an art but a science, based on rational and in particular geometrical principles (Chapter 1).

This is a characteristic of western fencing in comparison to many other swordmanship cultures.

The basic elements of a rational fencing method can be found, compressed in a few words, even in the late Roman military treatise by Vegetius (that resumes several more ancient texts), in the chapters about recruit training: the Romans teach to bring the blow without discovering the recruit's body, by the shortest way.

Coming to examples closer to our author, we note that in the town of Bologna in 1434 the fencing Master Filippo di Bartolomeo Dardi obtained the Geometry chair at the University with a short treatise (today unfortunately lost) on the relation between geometry and fencing.

Probably there was a strong link between the science of fencing (at least when it was in written form) and the high culture of the period, and it is not by chance that the most famous fencing school of the XV and the XVI century was in Bologna, the seat of the most ancient University in the world.

Moreover, also the other Italian medieval fencing treatises come from very important cultural centres: the *Flos Duellatorum* was written in Ferrara and the treatises by Vadi and by Pietro Monte come from Urbino.

Each one of those towns has its strong cultural characteristics: Bologna is the town of the University, founded on law studies (and in particular on the discovery of the Roman law) and then also on scientific studies.

The Imperial and "Ghibelline" spirit that the "Studio Bolognese" absorbed by the Roman law is evident, for example in Book V of Achille Marozzo's treatise that speaks of the laws, the rules and the ethics of duel, where it is possible to find a firm defence of the rights of the Emperor and of the Imperial law, in military matters even against the will of the Pope.

As for geometry, mathematics and even astrology, the importance of such disciplines for the Bolognese Master is evident.

As for the town of Ferrara, it was the capital of the tiny state of the Este family, famous for the production of cannons, the splendid tournaments and the flowering of the Italian chivalric poetry:

be sufficient here to name the “Orlando Innamorato” by the knight and poet Boiardo, the “Orlando Furioso” by Ariosto and the “Gerusalemme Liberata” by Tasso (a poet and an enthusiast fencer), to affirm the importance of this court in the creation and maturation of the Italian epic poetry on knightly feats.

Finally, we have to speak of Urbino, and of the peculiarity of this magnificent little town that in the XV century was an important cultural and military capital.

## 5 – The Court of Urbino: the Arms and the Letters

The Counts of Montefeltro (Montefeltro was the ancient name of the little village of S. Leo, in the Italian region of Marche), after the conquest of Urbino that was chosen as their capital, had gradually extended their dominion, to include a wide border zone among the regions of Romagna, Marche and Umbria.

Much more important than the territory itself, however, was the military fame and power obtained by the family in the eternal struggles among the various Italian powers and between them and the Pope.

In particular, the Montefeltro emerged in the war that they fought for the Pope against Braccio Fortebraccio da Montone, one of the greatest Italian mercenary “condottieri”, that aimed to conquer a big dominion around his capital Perugia at the expenses of the State of the Church.

At the head of their famous mercenary army “Compagnia Feltria”, the Montefeltro had won many battles and accumulated glory and treasures, obtaining by the Pope the title of Dukes of Urbino.

In 1444, after the death of the Duke Guidantonio and the misterious murder of his legitimate heir Oddantonio, the power was given to a natural son of the old Duke, that would become the most glorious and the most popular of the Montefeltro: the Duke Federico, a great man of arms and culture.

And the combination Arms-Culture had to become the leit-motiv of the Court of Urbino under Federico, as it is shown in a marvelous way in the “creative disorder” represented in the inlay work of the famous Studiolo Ligneo (Wooden Study) of the Ducal Palace, where the space in the false furniture that constitutes the walls is shared in harmony by books, scientific and musical instruments, pieces of armour, swords and maces, all left around with magnificent carelessness.

Federico had studied for a time at the “Casa Giocosa” (Playful House) of the philosopher and pedagogist Vittorino da Feltre, in Mantova, where for the first time it was taking place an attempt to bring back to life the classic ideals of “mens sana in corpore sano” (an healthy mind in a healthy body), or of the “kalos k’agathos”, (beautiful and good) of the ancient Greeks, with an educative experiment that for the first time in centuries considered phisical education not as opposed to culture but as a vital part of it, a cultural value in itself, in a vision of development of the human being as a whole, in harmony and equilibrium.

Urbino under Federico was all pervaded by this mentality, whose cardinal points, that had to be reconciled and melted together, were the classics and the moderns, the Books and the Arms.

Like the works of the science and culture of the period were usually read by the people of the Court together with the great Greek and Latin classics, also the physical culture of the classic world was melted together with the martial practice derived by the knightly tradition of their ancestors.

In this cultural environment one can imagine what could be the importance of the fencing Master, as an educator to whose discipline the young heir had to dedicate much time and effort.

Moreover, it is not difficult to understand why a fencer like our Filippo Vadi desired to leave to the following generations an important written treatise, in which fencing is defined as a scientific discipline and likened to music and geometry.

Also, in the treatise we can find echoes of the new philosophical school of the period, that followed the Platonic and Neo-platonic doctrines, for example where our author repeats: "ingenium superat vires, et quod maius est et quasi incredibile, sapiens dominabitur astris".

Let us remind the reader that in the same years the platonic philosopher Marsilio Ficino, in Florence, was writing not only his 12 books on the immortality of the soul, but also his 3 books "Sulla vita" ("About life"), in which he teaches how to obtain a long and healthy life.

It is in Platon's books that we find the three things to which a good educative system must train the young people: eidénai, lógos, érgon (thought, speech, action): gymnastics, in particular martial training, are basic disciplines for the formation of the warrior-citizens who must take care both of their own spiritual life and of the destiny of their State.

Some years later, in the fencing treatise that the Spaniard Pietro Monte wrote in Urbino, where he was fencing master, we'll find an exhaustive instruction about the physical training of the Italian knight between the end of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance: not only he learned the use of a great number of weapons, but also wrestling, riding, jousting, running, jumping, gymnastics.

This book is a real and complete treatise about physical disciplines and education, the first in the Western world, at least since Roman times, and surely the first printed book on this subject.

In fact, the treatise of Monte precedes of many years the book that was considered the first treatise on physical education up to now, the interesting "De arte gimnastica" of the illustrious doctor Girolamo Mercuriale from Forlì, printed in 1573 (but a more limited edition had already appeared in 1569 under the title "Artis gimnasticae apud antiquos...").

Both these texts can be considered completely pertaining to the tradition that from Vittorino da Feltre and his school influenced the Court of Urbino, and from there, one could say, all the region.

We could speak, for example, of the interest of the Malatesta family, Lords of Rimini and Cesena, for the books of medicine, a big number of which they collected, but also of the great passion of the noble families of the towns of Romagna, of Bologna and Ferrara for jousts, tournaments and every kind of sportive and/or martial deed or event.

But speaking of Master Pietro Monte, we have to dedicate some space to his great friend and appraiser, Baldassarre Castiglione.



We are already speaking here of people and facts following the times of our author, but it is important not to forget to speak of them in order to show the cultural environment and the ideals to which we must refer to understand Master Vadi. If we presume that Vadi was, at least for some time, the fencing Master of the young Guidubaldo di Montefeltro (destined to become Duke after the death of his father Federico) Pietro Monte could have had the same role after him, for a Duke Guidubaldo already adult and seriously ill, but still with power firmly in his hands. So Baldassarre Castiglione, a man of letters that frequented the Court, knew him when he was covering that role, that had been of our author.

In the very famous "Cortegiano" by Baldassarre Castiglione, the characteristics of the ideal courtesan are widely described, under form of a learned and amusing conversation that supposedly took place in the Court of Urbino.

It is one of the fundamental texts of the Italian Renaissance, that influenced in a deep and lasting way the European culture (for example in Spain it was an essential point of reference for more than a century both for literary works and essays, and it was considered the "livre de chevet" of any noble and gentleman of worth).

In that book the fencing Master of the Duke, Pietro Monte, is mentioned several times.

The Courtesan described in the dialogue is expression of a totally human and human ideal, born by the melting of the reading of classic authors and of experience of life in the Italian courts of the period, far away from the mystic of a part of the medieval knightly literature.

And still we're not speaking of a hyper-refined dandy, but of a person that knows how to be a firm support for his Lord, a human and concrete knight, a counsellor that dilutes the deepness of his wisdom with his humour and smile, a man that knows how to joke but never acts in a vulgar way.

A learned and fine man of the world, so, but most of all, and first of all, a brave man at arms that we can imagine fighting in a manly way with sword and shield or two-hand sword, according to the rules taught by Monte or Marozzo, certainly not an affected fencer posing with an ultra-light small sword, an image, this, that can be attributed maybe to the practitioners of the French school of the XVIII century, but certainly not to the times and places we're speaking about.

Castiglione, once cleared that the main activity of his ideal courtesan must be the profession of arms, never speaks in detail of the subject, describing only how he has to be and to behave in his normal social life in times of peace.

We see the martial virtues that he must own only for their mirroring in the way he considers courtly life, like the shadows in the famous cave of Platon: if we read carefully we can sense hard training sessions, harsh duels and cruel battles in the benevolent and sometimes ironic smile of the Courtesan, in the confidence and carelessness with which he participates to any mundane activity.

Castiglione, a man of peace, may have intuited the mentality that he put in his Courtesan, looking at concrete persons like Pietro Monte or the Duke himself.

And that's the reason why Castiglione describes very little of the martial education and profession of his Courtesan, explicitly leaving this subject to Pietro Monte, who, in fact, treats this point in a complete way in his treatise.

Another point in the Courtesan that we have to underline is the part of the text in which the merits of martial activity on one hand and of intellectual-literarian activity on the other are compared.

Most Renaissance authors sustained the superiority of literary activity over military practice, with the argument that the first is an activity of the mind and the other of the body, and like the mind is superior to the body, so Letters are superior to Arms.

Here this point is defended by the poet Pietro Bembo, but it is immediately teared to pieces by the other characters with a few sharp blows.

Only people that does not know military activities can defend a point like Bembo's one: in fact we're speaking of a discipline that is not only phisical, but involves the mind and the spirit.

Only in it, in fact, facing a lethal danger, a man throws into the game all his phisical and rational capacities, altogether with his psicological and moral firmness, his degree of control over his emotions and sensations.

We can imagine this harsh lesson, full of experience, coming directly from the lips of the old Duke Federico, a man that had many scars on his face and body, due to wars and tournaments.

Only the few people that know both realities can judge, and Urbino was one of the few places where it was possible at such a high level.

In the "De vita et gestis Brachii" by Giovanni Antonio Campano, (cited by Claudio Finzi in number 35 "War" of the Italian magazine "I Quaderni di Avallon"), the same position is defended by the Duke Braccio Fortebraccio, another military commander with a strong literary education, a duct and brave "condottiero", although an historic enemy of the Montefeltro family.

Unfortunately, the official high culture soon forgot this lesson, not rebuting but ignoring it.

We close this introduction inviting the reader to read our translation of the original text, and in this way he'll be able to understand of how much of that splendid son of the Italian Renaissance that is Castiglione's Courtesan is already present, "in nuce", in the wise advices of the Pisan Master to the ones that want to begin their walk on the arduous way of the sword.

## TRANSLATION OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT

### FIRST PART

(from pag. 1 recto to pag. 14 verso):

GUI. DUX. UR.

Ad illustrissimus Principem meum Guidum Feretranum Ducem  
Urbinatem

Hunc tibi do princeps dignissime guide libellum  
cui pariter mentem devoveoque meam.  
Quom musis studium dederis lege ludicra martis:  
Principibus muse marsque favere solent.  
Nunc te precipue phebus museque decorant,  
mox etiam mavors atque minerva colent

Philippi Vadi servi Liber de Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi, ad illustrissimus Principem  
Guidum Feretranum Ducem Urbini

(To the illustrious Prince Guido da Montefeltro Duke of Urbino. Oh worthy prince Guido, I dedicate to you this little book together with my soul. Having dedicated yourself to the Muses, read here the play of Mars: the Muses and Mars use to favour the princes. Now specially Phebus and the Muses adornate you, soon also Mars and Minerva will.

Book of the "gladiatorial" art of fighting, by Filippo Vadi, dedicated to the very illustrious Prince Guido di Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino)

As my frank soul, stranger to any vileness, by natural appetite moved me in my first and florid years to warlike acts and things, so, growing in strength and knowledge for the passing of time, my industrious soul moved me to desire to learn more of the art and more ingenious ways of those warlike acts and things, like the play of the sword, of the pike, of the dagger and of the pole-axe.

Of those things, with the help of the supreme god, I have acquired a very good knowledge, and this for practical experience and for the doctrine of many masters of several and different countries, well trained and duct to perfection in such art. And not wanting to diminish but to increase this doctrine not to let her die due to my negligence, because from it much advantage derives in battles, wars, riots and other warlike turmoils because it gives to trained and expert men a great and outstanding help, I have decided and stated in my mind to write a little book concerning the main and more useful things of this art, painting in it several illustrations and putting in it various examples, that any man instructed in this subject can use in his attacks and defences, tricks, stratagems and advices of various kinds and manners.

So may every man of good soul that will see this little work of mine love it as if it was a jewel and treasure and remember it in his most intimate heart, in order that never,

in any manner, this discipline, art and doctrine may arrive into the hands of men rough and of vile condition.

Because not the sky has generated those ignorant men, rough and without any cunning and discipline and completely missing any dexterity of the body, but they have been generated, instead, like reasonless brutes, to bring loads and to do vile and raw works.

And this is why I tell you that they are in any manner alien to this science, and on the contrary every man of high wits and agile in his limbs, like courtesans, scholars, barons, princes, Dukes and Kings, must be invited to this noble science, according to the principles of the "Instituta", that speak and tell us so: the Imperial majesty must be honored not only of arms but also it is necessary that it be armed of the sacred laws. And there cannot be anybody that believes that in this volume of mine I've put any false thing or any thing entangled in any mistake, because, quitting and cutting out the doubtful things, I'll only put in it things seen and tested by me: beginning then to express our intention, with the help and grace of the allmighty god whose name be hallowed in eternity.

And because some irrational animals do their fighting tricks naturally, without any doctrine, man misses any natural trick, and similarly his body misses arms, so nature duly gives him the hands, due to the missing of such arms, and instead of what he misses in natural tricks, she gives him the virtue of the intellect and thought, and it seems that if he had some natural tricks of his own he couldn't learn all the other tricks, and learn to use all the weapons and all the tricks in the best way, that is why nature did not give him neither arms nor tricks.

So intellect and reason is missing among other animals, in which things the arts and cunning flourishes, and in these two things not only man advances and overwhelms all the animals: but also any duct man and provided of good cunning advances and wins anyone that is stronger than him and full of force.

*lusta illud preclare dictum: ingenium superat vires, et quod maius est et quasi incredibile, sapiens dominabitur astris* (so it is right that famous saying: cunning wins strength, and what is more and almost incredible, the wise man dominates the stars): from the said cunning and from other and penetrating thoughts, comes an art of winning, overwhelming and defeating anyone that wants to fight and quarrel; and not only it happens that one man wins the other, but also it appears the way and possibility that one man be able to overwhelm several people, and not only it is shown the way and the document how to attack the enemy and to parry and defend yourself from him, but etiam (also) it is learned to take away his weapons from his hands: for which documents, often one man with few strength and little body wins and overwhelms and hits a big, strong and brave man, and so it happens that even a humble man wins a proud man, and an unarmed man an armed man.

And many times it happens that a man on foot wins and defeats a mounted man.

But as it would be a very inconvenient thing that such a noble doctrine dies and disappears for negligence, I, Philippo di Vadi from Pisa, having dedicated myself to this art since my first and flourishing years, having searched and practised it in several and different countries and lands, castles and towns to collect teachings and examples from several Masters perfect in art, thanks to the grace of god having acquired and obtained a very sufficient particle of it, I have decided to compose this little book of mine, in which I will put and show at least the notice of four kinds of arms, that is pike, sword, dagger and pole-axe.

And in such book I will describe the rules, ways and acts of that art, putting the examples together with various paintings, in order that anyone, even if he's new in art, may understand and know the ways to attack, and by what cunning and tricks he may expell and throw away from him the countermoves and the enemy's blows, putting in the book only that deep and good doctrine that I, with great troubles and effort and vigilance, have learned by several very perfect masters, putting also in it things discovered by me and often tested.

Remembering and advising everyone that he doesn't presume recklessly and does not dare to intermingle with this art and science if he's not magnanimous and full of courage, because any man of rough mind, coward and vile must be thrown out and banished from such nobility and honorability: because must be invited to this doctrine only soldiers, men at arms, scholars, barons, Lords, Dukes, Princes and King of lands, to some of which pertains to rule the state; and to some of which pertains to defend orphans and widows: and both are divine and pious deeds.

And if this little work of mine would come into the hands of some man duct in art and he thinks that there is in it anything superfluous or missing, he may cut out, diminish or increase what he pleases, because since now I submit myself to his corrections and censure.

#### CAPITULO PRIMO INCIPIT (CHAPTER ONE BEGINNING)

If someone wants to understand  
If fencing is a science or an art  
I say that you take note of my opinion

Consider well my sentence here  
That it's true science, not an art  
As I will show with concise speech

Geometry, that cuts, that can divide  
By numbers and measures infinite  
That of science fills her papers,

Subordinate is sword to all her care.  
It is convenient to measure blows and steps  
To what science shows as sure to you.

From Geometry Fencing was born  
Subordinate she is to her, and has no end  
And both of them endless become

And if you'll take on my doctrine  
You'll may by reason answer  
You'll take the rose out from the thorns.

And to make clearer your opinion  
And sharpen better the intellect  
So you can answer to the people

Music adornates her and makes sure  
That sing and sound be intermingled  
To make of fencing a perfect science.

Geometry and Music always share  
Their scientific virtues in the sword  
Of Mars to adornate the great light.

Now see if you will like my saying  
And the reasons that writing I give you,  
And keep them in your mind, don't make them fall,

So you'll answer the truth as I told you,  
That in fencing an end cannot be found  
Every riverso finds its dritto,  
Contrary by contrary, without end.

## CHAPTER II MEASURE OF TWO-HAND SWORD

The sword pretends to have right measure  
She wants the pommel under arm  
As it appears here in my writing.

Avoid she wants any uncomfort,  
Round be the pommel, in fist closed,  
And do this not to fall in trap.

And let again make use of this,  
That handle be always one span,  
Embarassed is who has not this measure.

Let not your mind be here confused,  
She wants the hilt as long as handle  
Together with pommel, it willn't damn you.

She wants the hilt be strong and square,  
With iron wide and pointed end  
That makes its duty of hurt and cut.

Take note and listen to this adding:  
The sword in armour if you'll try  
Make her four inches sharp from point

With the hilt that above was told,  
With pointed hilt and note the writings.

### CHAPTER III THE DISCOURSE OF THE SWORD

Take sword in hand in manly way  
'Cause she's a cross and royal weapon  
Your brave soul with her you will tune

If you will have in your brain salt  
Here to consider you will have  
What is the way to ascend these stairs.

The art of sword is just a crossing  
Measure to fight the thrusts and blows  
To make war to the ones defying.

To one side they do their defence,  
The dritto blows go to one side  
Roversos to the other make offence.

With dritto the true edge will hit  
And of this sentence take good note,  
With false edge find their way roversos.

And follow up as saying will state  
With sword in hand you'll take your guard  
If back or forward you step, on one side stay.

Make that your play won't be in vain  
To the side to which your face will be  
To it you'll go and never wonder,

Sending meanwhile your sword to hunt  
Towards the opponent, point to face,  
And of hurting you'll soon hasten.

Watchful a lot you need to be,  
Eye to the weapon that may hurt you,  
Composedly taking time and measure.

Make your heart tune to the defence  
Your feet and arms with their good measure,  
If honour should you take complete.

And take good note and understand  
That if comrade with sword will hit  
Also with yours you'll go to cross.

Look out you don't go out of way,

Go with a parry and thrust to face,  
Hammering blows send to his head.

Crossing you'll play, and be unconquered,  
If far will comrade cross, you'll thrust,  
Always refuse from him to stay away.

When to half sword his sword will be,  
Close up to him, as reason wants,  
Leave open play, and here you'll fight him.

Still, often it may happen  
That a man doesn't feel strong,  
Now here not words but wits you'll need.

Go out of his way with dexterity  
With good roverso yourself covering,  
Doubling with dritto with all speed.

If you don't feel you've lost your mind,  
Leave the wide play and the close take:  
You'll change direction to the strength.

And do understand this sentence mine,  
That when you'll cross, it'll be with strength,  
'Cause when it's missing sword can't resist.

Know that any strength wins knowledge,  
Once done the parry and, quick to hit,  
In close and open (play) his strength you'll beat.

And if you want make feel your thrust,  
With a cross-step you'll go out of way  
Make feel your thrust just in the breast.

With high your point and low the pommel,  
Extended out arms and strongly covering,  
You'll move to left with a big step,

And if your point finds free its way,  
Passing also out you'll never fear,  
In any case you'll give your present.

So close on him and take his handle;  
And if you see you cannot do it,  
You'll beat his sword and do your duty.

In steps you'll always go together



With enemy, and to find him;  
And what I tell you don't ignore:

As you will see his sword he moves,  
Or steps ahead or really throws,  
Either step back or close on him.

Let knowledge, force and courage have  
Who wants to have honour in arms,  
If those he misses, he'll keep training.

Brave heart need you to have,  
If strong a big man seems to you,  
You'll use your wit that gives advantage.

Like of death you should beware  
Of playing with courtesy with one  
That any hatred has against you.

And do take note of this good sentence:  
Your heart you know, not your comrade's,  
Never make use of this false fantasy.

Great you should be in every cunning  
If succes any you should have,  
Good fruit you'll have here from this gain.

This part, again, you'll understand:  
Who wants with every one to fight,  
Among all papers, one smears all,

Honour he's lost for just one fall.  
Below is him who above thinks he's,  
The one who often wants to fight;

Often people make with you discussion  
Contrasting soon you'll come to fight:  
Here it'll be clear who knows this art.

If like a sword the tongue would cut,  
And like a sword it really was,  
Infinite people dead would be.

Again, don't make from your mind fall  
That rightly you'll defend yourself  
And with your rights you'll rightly go.

Who wants to offend without a reason

His soul condemns, his body surely,  
Ashamed he makes his Master also.

And in your mind you well will keep  
To honour always your dear Master,  
His teachings cannot be ever paid.

Who wants to be skilful swordmaster  
Big deals of learning needs, of teaching also,  
Quitting from him any wrong move.

If loyalty will be by you beloved,  
To kings and princes you may speak,  
'Cause they make use of this good art,

As it is theirs to rule and reign  
And everyone's that justice keeps  
For orphans, widows and other cases.

This art is chief of any good  
With arms they keep cities and towns  
With arms they keep people's restraint;

Such dignity, again, it has this art  
That often merry makes your heart  
Hunting from you any and all vileness.

And makes you gain treasure and honour,  
And this any other thing outclasses:  
It always keeps you in your lord's grace.

Such famous art if you will have  
You'll not be poor, in any place,  
This virtue that so glorious is.

If poverty its cards will show to you,  
Just for a while it'll be, then you will see  
Richness embrace you for this art.

Yourself sometimes you'll find to be  
Down like dead candle in the wind:  
Don't doubt you'll soon be back again.

Hard wasn't it to find this art,  
Not the old art, but the new one,  
That, having found her, makes me happy.

Imprisoned I've kept her, to test her,

I leave her go, now, and here I swear:  
She gives me money and avails me,  
To virtuous ones it happens so.

#### CHAPTER IV

So noble this art is and so gentile,  
She teaches men how they should walk  
Quick, brave and lordly makes your eye.

This art to turn will teach to you,  
To cover well and to stay firm,  
For any thrust and cut, its parry.

How many, withour number, died  
'Cause this art they disliked so  
That with their hands have closed life's doors.

Than life there is no greater treasure,  
Anyone tries to defend it,  
To keep it everyone would struggle.

Any wealth leave, any comfort,  
Yourself defend using this art,  
Honour and glory so you'll have.

How good a thing it is and dear  
This art to learn that costs not much  
And life gives you a thousand times.

In many ways fight may take place  
Not searching it, if one must fight  
May he estinguish the other's fire.

This new art of mine, that's made by reason,  
Not the old one I say, that I can leave  
To our fathers with their guessings.

If you don't want to be honour-missing  
Your time you'll measure and comrade's,  
This is art's basis and first step.

Open your ears to these great lines  
And my fine thoughts do understand  
Your Master not to make complain.

Make your swords sisters always be  
When you go fencing with someone

And then whichever one you'll take.

No sword's advantage you will give  
Shame you would risk to take for that,  
And everyone should do like this.

Good eye and knowledge, speed you'll need  
And if your strength and heart with you will be  
You'll make the others scratch their scabies.

Understand here well my good saying:  
A big man wants length for his sword,  
For little man be the sword short.

Great strength of man can break the guards,  
Natural cunning can resist it,  
Gives to small men some good assurance.

Many blows knowing you'll have venom,  
Who few blows knows, hardly can fight,  
And so defeated he remains.

And if you follow my speech's thread  
And find the reasons of this art  
From all your troubles it'll take you out.

And take good note of what I tell you:  
Of art the secrets don't reveal  
May never you be hurt for this.

Again you'll listen well this other part  
The longer sword that is so deadly  
Without big danger you can't fight.

Of equal length may the swords be,  
As I told you in the previous chapter  
Of our book, just here above.

The two-hand sword only I esteem  
For any need I'd take just her,  
Of her I'm singing in my book.

If you don't want to be ashamed  
You'll never fight more than one man:  
You'd scream and cry just like a pipe.

If you could not avoid to fight  
With more than one, you'll keep in mind

To take a sword that you can handle.

You'll take not heavy but light sword,  
That brandish easily you can  
That for its weight don't trouble you.

Then you will need to change your ways  
You'll leave the thrust and you'll make use  
Of other blows to obtain your ends,  
As you will hear also in my saying.

#### CHAPTER V ABOUT THRUSTS AND CUTS

The sword one point and two edges be,  
But note and understand these lines  
May not your mind be here confused:

One edge is true, the other false  
And reason so commands and wants  
That in your mind you'll keep it firm

The dritto with true edge together goes  
May the roverso with the false edge be  
Except fendente, that the true edge wants.

Understand well, so, all my writings  
Just seven blows the sword can throw  
Six are the cuts, and one the thrust

To make you find again this streak  
Two from above, below and two in the middle  
Thrust in the middle with deceive and pain  
It often brings to our skies good weather.

#### CHAPTER VI THE SEVEN BLOWS OF THE SWORD

We are fendenti and we are meant to try  
Often with pain to cut and chop  
The head to teeth with direct blow

And any guard that's with low sword  
We often break with our cunning  
All of them passing without pain.

Good blows we make, of bloody sign,  
If we with rota are mixed up

Sustain to us is the whole art

Fendenti, of hurting we give dowry  
Into our guard passing we go  
In hurting slow never we are.

The rota I am, and I've this duty  
If you mix me with other blows  
I'll throw the thrust as from a bow.

Loyalty and courtesy I don't use  
Up to dritto fendente passing through  
And arms and hands I quickly cut.

Rota by name the people calls me  
For the false edge I'm always looking  
Who uses me I make him cute.

We are volanti, we go through,  
From the knee upwards our wounds,  
Fendenti and thrusts we may frustrate,

Crossing us passes without fail  
The rota that upwards hits us  
And with fendente the cheek hits.

## CHAPTER VII ABOUT THE THRUST

I am the one that doesn't fear  
To fight all blows, the thrust am I  
Like scorpion venom I will bring

So strong and ready and brave I feel  
Often the guards I will make fail  
When one that fights makes use of me  
Evil I do just touching, if I hit.

## CHAPTER VIII The dispute between cuts and thrusts

The rota with fendenti and volanti  
Speak against thrusts, and they do show  
That not so dangerous thrusts are.

"When they will come to our presence  
Any of us blows makes them lose way  
Loosing their hit with little jousting.

Don't loses way the turning cut  
Swift-turning man can't fear the thrusts,  
But any cut makes clear its way."

If you don't have memory lost  
If thrusts don't hit they have no use  
All other blows don't leave you so.

Against one man the thrust is good  
But against more it doesn't work  
Both books and action can confirm it

If rota throws a thrust you just don't fear,  
If soon it doesn't take fendente  
Fruitless it remains, as I would say.

And if you hit, then keep in mind:  
If the point soon doesn't go out  
As you have hit you will have pain.

You'll cut a blow and your sword's dead  
If thrust in hitting loses way  
Or you'll repair in "low right cross".

Dritto fendente of sword I'll make  
And of your guard I'll take you out  
To make you go in a hard place

Don't lose an hour of time to learn  
The long times with your hand serene  
Above the others place yourself and honour take.

Break any guard that is low made  
Low guards for little strength are waiting  
And if you burden them, you'll pass

A heavy weapon can't find holes  
The light one flies like from bow arrow.

## CHAPTER IX ABOUT THE CROSS

I am the cross with Jesus' name  
Ahead and back I make my sign  
Many defences to find out.

If I will cross against a weapon

I don't lose way, I'm so trustworthy  
Often it happens that I search this

And when long weapon I've to fight  
Who'll rightly use me for defence  
In any deed he will have honour.

## CHAPTER X

Go on we want with this good work,  
So we must thoroughly declare  
Everyone of the blows of art.

To make you know and make use of it  
Reason asks me that first I show

The rotation, the principle of sword.  
With arms extended you will go

Hitting with edge in middle of comrade.  
If great in art you want to appear

Move then you can from guard to guard  
With slow hand and serene,

With steps never too long.  
If you should make a stramazzone

Be it with short turn, in front of face,  
And the wide ones you shouldn't do

'Cause any long time is time lost.  
Make the roverso be aiding you,

Side-stepping out with your left foot,  
Throwing the dritto also,

Having your eye to parry well.  
When to half-sword you want to come

As your comrade his sword will lift  
Then cautious shouldn't you to be

Take the right time or it'll cost much  
In the Boar's Guard you have to be

When you'll go in with thrust to face,  
Don't stay divided, far from him,



Fendente riverso you'll soon turn  
And throw the dritto and keep in mind it.

So understand my true intention,  
With reason clear and strong,

I hope to wholly show you in verse:  
Don't be it pure riverso,

Fendente not, but between one and other  
Be it between them, and a mix,

From both directions hammering head.  
I advice you again that once you've entered

With feet together you'll then settle  
So you'll be Lord and strong

In dire straits to put and bravely hurt:  
And when riverso fendente you will throw

The left knee flex and, note the writings,  
Extend your right leg

Without changing it to the other side.  
Then you will see it will be attacked

The left foot now, or even head  
Because they're to him closer

That the right foot that's sideways.  
Then you'll be safe from either side

And if fendente dritto you want throw  
You then will need to advance

Your right knee, and left extend.  
The head invites the attack now

With the right foot that's closer  
This is a better way

Than our old ones' footwork.  
No one can argue or deny it,

Because you're both stronger and safer,  
Tough in defending,

With shorter time ready for war  
And no one can throw you to ground.

## CHAPTER XI THE DISCOURSE OF THE SWORD PLAY

When to half sword you will arrive

The dritto making, or roverso  
You'll try the meaning to understand

Of what I tell you, as you've come here:  
If you'll be at that point, keep the eye ready

Make short your feints, with parries  
And high your sword you'll keep,

Above your head may your arms play  
With a few words I cannot say it,

'Cause of half-sword are these effects.  
To please yourself the most, so

When you will parry, do it with fendente  
Cautiously shifting here the sword

From you, and comrade's one you'll push  
Good gain again you'll have

Every blow parrying in right way.  
When you'll parry riverso, bring ahead

Your right leg, and as I said you'll parry,  
When parrying dritto

Ahead you'll bring your left foot.  
Also in your mind you need consider

That when riverso fendente you will throw  
Cautious you'll keep your eye:

Beware a dritto don't come from below  
And if your comrade throws, swiftly you will

Parry, to head a slight feint making  
With your false edge and wisdom,

As sword he lifts, roverso throw  
From below upwards through his arms,

Doubling it soon with the deritto.  
And you will note this, still,

That the art's reasons don't betray you.  
If you will throw a dritto, then beware

His manriverso may not hit you.  
Make your sword running go

To parry with fendente, not to be hit,  
And if you want by then

To close on him and handle take  
Your duty you'll do to him

With pommel hammering moustache,  
Look out that tangled you don't get.

## CHAPTER XII DISCOURSE OF THE SWORD'S FEINTS

Again I warn you, and of my saying take note,

That when to half-sword you have come  
Aim can you well to either side

Following art with some good feinting.  
Feints they are called, they're a dimming

That in defending others dims,  
To understand they don't permit

What you want do and to which side.  
Clearly show it I cannot do

Only with words as with a sword  
Make that your mind will go

This art investigating with my saying,  
Brave you'll become following reason.

'Cause here I warn and teach you  
And make that with your wisdom

You follow me through many verses

To find of art the basis and the river.

### CHAPTER XIII DISCOURSE OF HALF-SWORD PLAY

To half-sword having you so come,  
To just one side hammer on him  
Just to one side you'll throw

And to the other send your feints  
And when his way, parrying, he'll lose,

To the other side you'll hammer him  
Then, at that point, you will consider

Which is the grip to end this game  
And if a blow you would prefer

Fendente riverso you'll let go,  
But passing through,

And a false edge with thrust to face.  
From him divided you'll not stay,

With the riverso either, or with the dritto,  
With any of them you'll work

As long as knees flex to either side  
As above here I've showed to you.

Again this adding I'll repeat  
Always approach with thrusts

From below upwards forking face  
And always blows at right time use.

### CHAPTER XIII DISCOURSE OF THE SWORD'S HALF TIME (MEZZO TEMPO)

I cannot show you here, in writing,  
Of the half time the ways and reasons,  
'Cause in the knot remains

Brevity of time and of its throwing.  
The mezzo tempo is just a turning

Of knot: it's swift and quick in hurting  
And rarely it may fail

When with good measure it is done:  
And so take not of what I write,

Hardly can understand who never did it.  
Often the "volarica"

With its good edge break others' heads  
Of the whole art it is the jewel

'Cause in one time it hurts and parries  
Oh, how it is a dear thing

To practice it with the good reason,  
And makes you bring the art's high banner.

## CHAPTER XV DISCOURSE OF THE SWORD AGAINST THE ROTA

Many there are that make foundation

Of rotate well to either side  
Look out that you be here advised

That as his sword rotating moves  
You'll rotate also and win the trial.

Together with him go when throwing  
And make that you will go

With your sword following his sword.  
To clear your fantasy here better,

Again in Boar Tooth you can go  
And if he will rotating go,

You also, upwards from below  
Hear you my reasons and understand,

You new in this art or if you're expert,  
And so I want you to be sure

This is the art and the true science.  
Take this that's certain as a balance:

If comrade stays in Iron Door  
Then in your heart I'll enclose this,

That you in Archer Guard will settle.  
Look that your point don't lose its way

That comrade's sword covered keeps  
Out of his way a bit you'll go

Raising your sword and hand to thrust  
And when your sword to cross has come

Then make the thirteenth grip,  
As it appears unveiled

In our book painted at seventh page.  
You can in this art also use

The blows and grips easier for you  
The hard to make ones you will leave,

Keep to the things your hand prefers  
This will you often in art honour.

#### CHAPTER XVI THE SWORD'S TEACHINGS

May your sword will be for you

Just like a big covering shield  
Now take this fruit of mine,

That I give you to make you master.  
Look that your sword will never be,

Guards or blows making, never far  
Oh what a safe thing it will be

That your sword's way be always short  
Make that your point will look

At comrade's face, or even hit,  
You'll take his bravery out of him,

As he'll see always point in front  
And always forward you will play.

With sword that shortly turns,  
With hand easy and serene,

Your comrade's time breaking so often,

You'll weave a web better than spider's.

SECOND PART  
(from pag. 15 recto to pag. 42 verso)

Pg. 15 recto

(sextant on the head)  
I am a sextant, that divides,  
Oh fencer, do my reason hear  
Time you will measure in the same way

(bear on the right shoulder)  
The bear's nature is to turn  
Here, there, down, up to go  
The same your shoulder should here do  
Then to the hunt you'll send your sword.

(dragon on the right hand)  
Cautious the right hand be  
Lethal and brave such as a snake

(ram on the left shoulder)  
I am a ram, I'm always looking,  
That by my nature I want to butt,  
So your cut'd better be so cunning,  
I'll always parry your rispostes.

(greyhound on the left hand)  
With my left hand I take my blade's point  
To hurt with her when it'll arrive  
And if you want this blow complete  
Make that it's quick like a greyhound.

(eye on the heart)  
The eye with heart watchful will be  
He's brave and he's of prudence full

(keys on the knees)  
And who these keys with him won't have  
In this game not much war will bring

The legs can justly keys be called,  
As they can close and they can open.

(sun on the right foot)  
You see the sun that great turn makes  
Where it was born it will return,  
And like the sun may foot come back  
If with your play honour you want.

(tower on the left foot)  
Left foot you must stop without fear  
Firm should it be just like a rock  
Then fully safe your body is.

(wheel under the feet)  
When he'll attack to either foot  
Like wheel of mill it has to turn.  
It is the heart's that's to be watchful  
As shame and honour on him depend.

Pg. 15 verso

These are the blows of two-hand sword,  
The mezzo tempo in knot remains.

I am the rota that rotates  
False edge of sword I will go searching.

We are volanti, always crossing,  
From knees above slashing we go.

We are fendenti, it's our work to  
Cut down to teeth with downright blows.

I am the thrust, dangerous, quick,  
Of other blows I am Grand Master.

Pg. 16 recto

Pic. 1

You are the guards with all your names  
Both of your sides be here revealed.

Philippo di Vadi pisano  
(Filippo Vadi, from Pisa)

Pic. 2



I am the strong Middle Iron Door,  
With thrust and fendenti to bring death.

I'm Lady's Guard and I'm not vain,  
who the sword's length often disguise.

Pg. 16 verso

Pic. 1

I'm Iron Door the flat to ground  
That cuts and thrust always can stop.

I'm Falcon Guard proud and superb  
To make defence in many ways

Pic. 2

I'm the Short Guard, with the sword's length  
Often I hurt and return swiftly

I'm Archer Guard, for all my knowledge  
Malice I use here in my kingdom.

Pg. 17 recto

Pic. 1

I am the Guard of the True Window  
That the wrong things from art cancels

I am the Crown, they made me Master  
Of all the bindings I am the dextruous.

Pic. 2

I am the deadly Boar Tooth Guard,  
Who looks for trouble, I give him trouble.

I am Long Guard with my short sword  
And with my genius all blows I knock.

Pg. 17 verso

Pic. 1

I'm Frontal Guard and I'm so safe  
That cuts and thrusts don't bother me

I am the Boar Guard, I'm outside  
To hurt I'll never hesitate

Pic. 2  
Riverso fendente with left foot I've thrown,  
Without a step, turning my flank,  
Dritto I'll throw and move no foot.

Pg. 18 recto

Pic. 1  
By this arm grip that I've made you  
My edge or pommel you will taste

Pic. 2  
For the rotation of my swift sword  
With her of hurting I'll not stop.

Pg. 18 verso

Pic. 1  
I've made a binding from left side  
With a sword blow you will be grounded.

Pic. 2  
So I hold you with my left hand  
And cuts and thrusts for you I don't miss

Pg. 19 recto

Pic. 1  
By the turn that with sword I've made  
Half of your throat I think I've cut

Pic. 2  
You will be grounded by this move  
'Cause you've your play totally failed

Pg. 19 verso

Pic. 1  
With my sword here I'll not make war  
But it's with yours that I'll ground you

Pic. 2  
I've turned you by force and no hindrance  
Your arm I'll break by my dexterity

Pg. 20 recto

Pic. 1

With dexterity I've put you into this place  
By my first move I'll make you fall

Pic. 2

By this technique I've put you in key  
I'll break your arm in one *ave's* time

Pg. 20 verso

Pic. 1

By this turning of pommel I've bound you  
And if I want you will be grounded

Pic. 2

By this sword turn that you have made  
I'll break your arm at my first move

Pg. 21 recto

Pic. 1

By the turn given to my swift sword  
I'll hurt your arms or your head here.

Pic. 2

If to your sword I'll put my handle  
I'll make it fall by this technique

Pg. 21 verso

Pic. 1

This is a grip I make below  
I'll make it fall with my first blow

Pic. 2

That I would throw a roverso you have thought,  
With elbow your sword's pushed away

Pg. 22 recto

Pic. 1

By the turn that my handle did  
I'll make that upsidedown you fall

Pic. 2

This is a sword grip that's above  
And if I want I will ground you

Pg. 22 verso

Pic. 1  
I made the feint to throw fendente  
Your jaw I'll cut with all your teeth

Pic. 2  
By throwing riverso that I've made  
I'll give you pommel with fine move

Pg. 23 recto

Pic. 1  
This is a grip I make inside  
To ground you'll go as I believe

Pic. 2  
To head I hit you with my sword  
Then I'll take yours with my swift wit

Pg. 23 verso

Pic. 1  
From the half-sword your sword I beat  
You'll have good portion of my pommel

Pic. 2  
You parried badly with riverso  
To half sword binding you have come

Pg. 24 recto

## POLE-AXE GUARDS IN FULL ARMOUR

Pic. 1  
I'm Lady's Guard, of great offence  
To any movement to respond

I'm in Boar Guard as I have said  
I'll maim for sure all of your body

Pic. 2  
The Archer Guard they do call me

And I will make any blow fail

I am the Cross Guard, I'm so called,  
Of cut and thrusts I don't fear number

Pg. 24 verso

Pic. 1

I was in Boar Tooth with my pole-axe  
That's why I hit you in your face

Pic. 2

From your face visor I have lifted  
I hit, any defence I took away

Pg. 25 recto

Pic. 1

Under your right arm I've my hand  
Into the key I put you as it's written

Pic. 2

The grip I'll make you will be this  
You'll lose your pole-axe, then your head

Pg. 26 recto

## THE TWO-HAND SWORD GUARDS IN FULL ARMOUR

Pic. 1

I am the Lower Snake Guard  
Of hurts and thrusts I am dispenser

I am the Leopard Guard serene  
And with my tail I'll give you venom

Pic. 2

I am the Snake that stays above  
And high and low I do my job

I'm Leopard Tail over the arm  
And any sword from me I remove

Pg. 26 verso

Pic. 1

I am the first hitter of art  
To make defence to either part

Pic. 2  
I push my point towards your face  
You see my sword rising and rising

Pg. 27 recto

Pic. 1  
Your sword I want you leave, unwanted,  
For your mistakes I'll do you worse

Pic. 2  
If I cannot thrust to your face  
I'll hit with pommel that's here come

Pg. 27 verso

Pic. 1  
For my side-stepping out of way  
To ground I'll throw you with your sword

Pic. 2  
FORM OF THE TWO HAND SWORD  
The sword to fight in armour wants to have the form written below, that is: its length wants to arrive with the pommel under the arm, to cut four inches from the point, the handle wants to be of one span. The hilt wants to be long as the sword's handle is: and it wants to be pointed at either side, and similarly wants to be pointed the pommel, in order to have the possibility to hurt with any of them.

Pg. 28 recto

#### PLAY OF LONG PIKE

Pic. 1  
With a short pike like this I'm waiting  
To long and short I make invitation

Pic. 2  
For the way I wait you with my pike  
With half a turn I'll hurt your breast

Pg. 28 verso

Pic. 1  
For the half turn that my pike's done  
Your breast or side I will hit here

Pic. 2  
Here all the pike techniques will end  
This act is put here by tradition

Pg. 29 recto  
(THE DAGGER)

Pic. 1  
This countermove that I make you  
To turn away your arm's grip is

Pic. 2  
Due to the hand you've on my shoulder  
You'll go to ground just in moment

Pg. 29 verso

Pic. 1  
Your dagger I can take and also hurt you  
By this good grip that cannot fail

Pic. 2  
Dagger to ground I will make fall  
With turn I'll do it and with my wits

Pg. 30 recto

Pic. 1  
This thrust immediately is made  
Swiftly your dagger I'll make fall

Pic. 2  
This thrust to your hand I have put  
Your dagger soon will be in the ground

Pg. 30 verso

Pic. 1  
This parry I'll make so very soon  
That in the key you will be put

Pic. 2  
To one play I'll jump due to my parry  
And with my dagger I'll open way

Pg. 31 recto

Pic. 1  
Due to this parry you have made  
To lower key I'll make you enter

Pic. 2  
I take your dagger or I'll hurt you  
If art I'll not totally fail

Pg. 31 verso

Pic. 1  
If dagger to the ground I turn  
Never again with her you'll fight

Pic. 2  
Your hand to hurt here I look for  
Under the key I'll make you come

Pg. 32 recto

Pic. 1  
This cross that towards you I make  
By it with pain in key I'll put you

Pic. 2  
This blow with fist I have here made  
Your dagger inside you I will put

Pg. 32 verso

Pic. 1  
This one-hand parry I have made  
Your dagger I'll make go to ground

Pic. 2  
For the way I took you I've no doubt  
To ground you'll go, as I would say.

Pg. 33 recto

Pic. 1  
By the way I hold you I'm prepared  
To swiftly break your dagger's arm.

Pic. 2  
You well can see by how I hold you  
That you and your dagger are my prey



Pg. 33 verso

Pic. 1

I see that my play don't fails me  
Over your shoulder your arm breaks

Pic. 2

Your arm in this way I want take  
For that dagger I'll bind you

Pg. 34 recto

Pic. 1

You see you're won, to ground you go  
I'll break your arm and you'll lose dagger

Pic. 2

So I hold you and I push you  
I'll follow up in close and wide play

Pg. 34 verso

Pic. 1

I come to you with crossed arms  
And all the moves shown I can do

Pic. 2

You'll go to ground for left hand play  
And by this move your life you'll lose

Pg. 35 recto

Pic. 1

You are in art not well instructed  
You'll find yourself here quickly grounded

Pic. 2

By this grip here in which I've got you  
I'm sure that in the key you'll enter

Pg. 35 verso

Pic. 1

I strongly push on this your elbow  
I'll break your arm without a doubt

Pic. 2

This is a strong damage to arm

The pain you have you will not bear

Pg. 36 recto

Pic. 1

In the key I've put you here, unwilling,  
'Cause you're in art not very perfect

Pic. 2

With my right hand this move I've made  
Into your thigh I'll thrust your dagger

Pg. 36 verso

Pic. 1

When in the ground you'll be you'll say  
"I didn't think that'd be the outcome"

Pic. 2

This is a grounding very strong  
And if I want you may have death

Pg. 37 recto

Pic. 1

I hold you so that I would say  
To ground you'll go even unwilling

Pic. 2

So now to ground you have to go  
And with your dagger don't make war

Pg. 37 verso

Pic. 1

By passing here under the arm  
To ground I'll put you with much pain

Pic. 2

#### MEASURE OF THE DAGGER

The length of the dagger wants to be up to the elbow, with one sharp edge and two edges, the handle wants to be of one "somesso"\* as it appears the form of it painted here below.

(a somesso is the following measure: having all the fingers extended and the hand wide open, open the thumb to form one "L": the somesso is that measure, i.e. four fingers plus the length of the thumb).

Pg. 38 recto

(MISCELLANEOUS TECHNIQUES)

Pic. 1

I am defending as I can  
When you will throw I'll run on you

Pic. 2

As you will throw, your blow'll be lost  
I'll beat your weapon with riverso

Pg. 38 verso

Pic. 1

I'm in my guard with good mandritto  
When you will throw you'll see what's written

(DAGGER TECHNIQUES)

Pic. 2

Following in the work there are some dagger techniques as it follows here: one needs to consider the act the grip the beginning the end, if one wants to understand the way: the advice and what it is in the cunning of the human nature, and therefore everyone that is expert in the art will be able to understand all the other paintings put in this little work of mine, and firstly of sword, pole-axe, pike and dagger.

In all the following pages, from 39 verso to 42 verso:

Pic. 1

Dagger technique

Pic. 2

End of the technique

## ORIGINAL TEXT IN ITALIAN

GUI. DUX. UR.

Ad illustrissimus Principem meum Guidum Feretranum Ducem  
Urbinatem

Hunc tibi do princeps dignissime guide libellum  
cui pariter mentem devoveoque meam.  
Quom musis studium dederis lege ludicra martis:  
Principibus muse marsque favere solent.  
Nunc te precipue phebus museque decorant,  
mox etiam mavors atque minerva colent

Philippi Vadi servi Liber de Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi, ad illustrissimus Principem  
Guidum Feretranum Ducem Urbini

(All'illustre Principe Guido da Montefeltro Duca di Urbino. O degnissimo principe Guido, consacro questo libretto a te e insieme l'animo mio, essendoti dedicato alle Muse leggi i giochi di Marte: le Muse e Marte sono soliti favorire i principi. Ora ti adornano specialmente Febo e le Muse, presto anche Marte e Minerva. Libro dell'arte "gladiatoria" del combattimento, di Filippo Vadi, dedicato all'illustrissimo Principe Guido di Montefeltro, Duca di Urbino)

Avendomi mosso per appetito naturale quale producea fuori el mio franco animo alieno da ogni viltade nelli mei primi e floridi anni ad acti e cose bellicose: cussì per processo di tempo crescendo in forze et in sapere mi mosse per industria ad volere inparare più arte e modi de ingiegno de dicti acti et cose bellicose, come è giuchare di spada de lanza di daga e azza. De le qual cose mediante lo aduito de summo idio ne ò acquistato assai bona notitia e questo per pratica experientia e doctrina de molti maestri de varii e diversi paesi amaestrati e docti in perfectione in tale arte. Et per non minuire anzi volendo acrescere tal doctrina acioché per mia negligentia epsa non perisca per che da epsa non procede pocho alturio ne' bataglie, guerre, rixe e altri tumulti bellicosi: Immo dona agli omini instruti e periti in tale materia uno prestantissimo e singulare sussidio. Ho proposto e statuido nella mente mia de compillare uno libretto concernente cosse le qualle sono più oltra e più proluxe de tale arte: depingendo in quello varie figure e ponendoli exempli diversi, per li quali qualunqua homo instructo in tal materia, possa usare nel so asaltare e nel so diffendere, astucie, calidità e avisi di più ragione e manere. Adunque ciascuno di generoso animo vederà questa mia opereta, ammi epsa sì come uno gioiello e texauro e recordansello ne lo intimo core, a ciò che mai, per modo alcuno, tale industria arte e dotrina non pervenga a le mane de homini rusticali e di vile condizione. Perché el cielo non à generato tali homini indocti, rozi et fuori de ogni ingiegno et industria et omnino alieni da la agilità del corpo, ma più tosto sono stati generati a similitudine de animali inragionevoli a portare carichi et fare opere vile e rusticale. E perché debitamente io vi dico loro essere per ogni modo alieni da tal scientia e per

l'opposito al mio parere, ciascuno di perspicace ingegno e ligiadro de le membra sue, come sono cortegiani, scolari, baroni, principi, Duchi et Re, debeno essere invitati a questa nobile scientia, secondo el principio de la "Instituta" quale parla e dice cosi: el non bixogna solo la maestà inperiale essere honorata di arme ma ancora è necesario epsa sia armata de le sacre legge.

Né sia alcuno quale creda che in questo mio volume sia posta cosa falsa o invelupata de alcuno errore, perché tollendo e rescecando via le cosse dubiose, solo li metterò cose vedute e provate da me: comenzando adunque ad exprimere la intentione nostra, con l'adiuto e grazia de lo omnipotente dio del qualle el nome sia benedetto in eterno.

Et perché alcuni animali inrationabili fano li loro artificii naturalmente, senza alcuna doctrina de l'homo manca de artificio naturalmente sì come il corpo de quello manca de arme debitamente li presta la natura per lo mancamento de dite arme le mane et in loco de quello che 'l manca de artificij naturali, li presta la virtù de intellecto e cogitatione, e come si lui avesse avuto alcuni artificii naturalmente non poria acquistare artificii per lo resto; e per lo meglio a lui ad usare tutte le arme e tutti li artificii, però non li fo prestato da dita natura né arme né artificio.

Have adoncha bixogno tra li altri animali lo intelletto e ragione, ne le qual cosse fiorisce arte et ingiegni, de' quali due cosse non solo avanza e supera tutti gli animali: ma ciascuno homo docto e adoctato de bono ingiegno avanza a supedita qualunqua sia più robusto di lui e più pieno di forze. Iusta illud preclare dictum: ingenium superat vires, et quod maius est et quasi incredibile, sapiens dominabitur astris: nasce da dito ingiegno e da altri e penetrative cogitatione, una arte de vincere superare e debbelare qualunque vol combattere e contrastare; e non solo adviene che uno homo vinca l'altro, ma ancora nasce modo et possibilità che uno solo superi più persone, e non se mostra solo el modo e documento de assaltare lo adversario e repararsi e deffendersi da lui, ma etiam se insegna advisi de togliere l'arme sue di mano: per li quali documenti, spese fiate uno de poche forze e piccolo sottomete prosterne et sbate uno grande robusto, e valoroso e cusì adviene che anche uno humile avanza el superbo e uno disarmato lo armato.

Et molte volte accade che uno a piedi vinci e sconfigie uno da cavallo.

Ma perché el seria cossa molto inconveniente che così nobile doctrina per negligentia perise e venise meno, lo philippo di vadi da pisa, havendo ateso a tale arte insino a li mei primi et floridi anni havendo cercato e praticato più et diversi paesi et terre castelle e citade per raccogliere amaestramenti et exempli da più maestri perfecti nell'arte, per la dio gratia havendomi acquistato et conseguito una particella assai sufficiente, ho deliberato de componere questo mio libreto nel qualle ve si ponerà e dimostrerà almeno la noticia di quatro manere d'arme, cioè lanza, spada, daga e aza. Et in epso libro per mi si descrivirà regole, modi et atti de talle arte, metendo li exempli con varie figure, aciò che ciascheduno, novo ne l'arte, comprehenda e cognosca li modi de assaltare, e per le qualle astutie e calidità lui expella et rebuti da sé le contrarie e i nimici colpi; ponendo solo nel dicto libro quella doctrina vera e bona la qualle io con grandissimi affanni et fatiche e vigilie ho inparato da più perfectissimi maistri metandoli ancho cosse per mi atrovate e spesso provate.

Ricordando et amonendo ogniuno non prosumma temerariamente né habia ardire de intermeterse in tale arte e scientia, se lui non è magnanimo e pien de ardire: perché qualunqua homo grosso d'inzegno, pusilanimo e velle, debbe essere caciato e

refudato da tanta nobilità e gientileza: perché solo a questa dottrina se debeno invitare sacomani, homini d'arme, scolari, baroni, Signori, Duchi, Principi e Re di terre de le qualli ad alcuni de loro apertene a governare la repubblica; et ad alcuni de loro apertene deffendere pupili e vedoe: et tute due sono opere divine e pie. Et se questa mia opereta pervenisse a mane de alcuno docto nella arte e paresseli che in epsa fosse alcuna cossa superflua o manchevole piazzali de resecare minuire e acrescere quello li parerà, perché insino da mò io mi sottopono a sua correctione e censura.

## CAPITULO PRIMO INCIPIT

Se alcun volesse intender e sapere  
se lo scrimir è arte over scienza  
io dico che tu noti el mio parere

Considera bene questa mia sente(n)za  
che l'è scienza vera e non è arte  
e mostrallo con breve eloquenza.

La geometria che divide e parte  
per infiniti numeri e misure  
che impi(e) di scientia le sue carte,

la spada è sottoposta a le sue cure,  
convien che si mesuri i colpi e i passi  
a ciò che la scientia t'asecure

Da geometria lo scrimir se nasce  
è sottoposto a lei, e non ha fine  
e l'uno e l'altro infinito fasse

E se tu notarai le mie doctrine,  
tu saperai responder con rasone  
e caverai la roxa de le spine

Per farte chiara ancor tua opinione,  
per aguciarte meglio l'intelletto,  
a ciò che tu respondi a le persone:

la musica l'adorna e fa sugetto  
che 'l canto e 'l sono s'enframette in l'arte  
per farlo di scientia più perfectio

la geometria e musica comparte  
le loro virtù scientifiche in la spada  
per adornare el gran lume de Marte

Or vidi se 'l mio dir ponto t'agrada

e la rasone ch'io t'alego in scripto  
et tiello nel cervello che no te cada.

Che tu respondi el ver come io t'ho dicto  
ché in lo scrimir non se trova fine,  
c'ogne riverso trova il dricto,  
contrario per contrario senza fine

## Cap. II

Misura de spada da doi mane

La spada vole avere iusta misura  
vole arivare el pomo sotto el brazio  
come qui apare nella mia scriptura

Per volere schifare ancora impazio:  
tondo el pomo per star nel pugno chiuso  
e questo fa' per non intrar nel laccio.

E fa che questo te sia ancora in uso  
che 'l ma(n)tener sia sempre d'una spanna  
chi non ha sta misura sie confuso

A ciò che la tua mente non s'inganna,  
vol l'elzo longo quanto el ma(n)tenere,  
el pomo insieme, che non te condana.

Vol l'alzo forte e quadro nel dovere  
con la ferruza larga e tracta in punta,  
che per ferire e tagliare faccia el dovere.

Fa' che tu note e intendi questa giunta:  
si con spada in arme tu voi provare  
fa' che la taglii quatro dita in punta

col mantener che di sopra è ditto  
col pontivo elzo et nota ben lo scripto.

## Cap. III

Ragion de spada

Piglia la spada in mano virilmente  
perché l'è croce e è un'arma reale.  
Insieme acorda l'animo valente.

Si tu averai nel cervel tuo sale

el te bixogna qui considerare  
qual via s'adopra da salir tal scale.

L'arte de spada è solo un'incrociare,  
partir la punta e i colpi a la contexta  
per far la guerra a chi vol contrastare.

Da una parte si fano difexa,  
i colpi diritte da un lato vada,  
i riversi da l'altro faccia offexa.

El taglio ritto nel suo ritto cada,  
e fa' che note ben questa ragione,  
el reverso col falso piglia strada.

Et fa' che segui poii come 'l dir pone  
metteti in posta con la spada in mano,  
s'tu passi o torni remane in galone.

Perché non sia el tuo giucare invano,  
da quella parte che volto hai la faccia,  
da quella entra e non te para strano,

mettendo la tua spada allora in caccia  
verso el compagno con la punta al volto,  
e de feriri subito te spaccia.

Esser ti bixogna acorto molto,  
con l'ochio a l'arma che te po' offendere,  
pigliando el tempo, e 'l misurar, raccolto.

Fa' che 'l cor s'acorde ne defendere,  
i piedi e braccia con bona misura,  
se honor vorai al tutto prendere.

Et nota bene e intende mia scr(i)ptura,  
che se 'l compagno tra' con la sua spada,  
e con la tua ad incrociar procura.

Guarda non vadi però for de strada,  
va' con coverta e con la punta al viso,  
martelando a la testa i colpi vada.

Gioca de croce e non serai conquixo.  
Se 'l compagno incrocia largo, e tu punta,  
volendo tu da lui non star div(i)xo.

Quando la sua a meza spada è gionta



stregnite a lui, ché la ragione el vole  
e lassa el gioco largho e qui t'afronta.

Ancora spesse volte achader sole  
che l'hom non sente aver bona forteza,  
or qui bixogna ingiegno e non parole.

Passa for de strada con destreza,  
con la coverta del bon manreverso,  
reddopiando el derito con prestezza.

Si tu non senti aver l'ingiegno perso,  
lassa el largo e tienti al giucar stretto:  
farai a la fortezza mutar verso.

Et fa' che note e intende questo detto:  
che quando incroce, incrociarai per forza,  
perché smorza de spada el suo diffeto.

Sapii che ingiegno ogni possanza sforza,  
fata la coverta e presto a lo ferire,  
al largo e stretto abaterai la forza.

Et se la punta li voi far sentire,  
va' for de strada per traverso passo,  
fagli nel peto tua punta sentire.

Con la punta alta e col tuo pomo basso  
e i bracci in fora, con bona coverta  
passa dal lato stancho de bon passo,

et se la punta trova la via aperta,  
passando pur di fora non temere  
che in ogni modo li darai l'oferta.

Stregnilo e piglia alor suo mantenere;  
se questo vede non posser ben fare,  
pestulando sua spada fa' el dovere.

Fa' che t'acordi sempre nel passare  
col tuo nimico, opure quando tu 'l trove;  
e questo ch'io ti dico non lassare:

come tu vedi che la spada el move,  
opur passase o veramente tragga,  
over tu torna o adosso fa' che 'l trovi.

Sapere, fortezza et ardimento agga

colui che vole in arme aver onore,  
se questo manca a (e)sercitar si stagga.

El ti bixogna havere ardito el core,  
se l'omo grande te paresse forte  
l'ingegno adopra che te dà favore.

Guarda ben certo como da la morte,  
che 'l tuo giucar non sia per cortesia  
con altri che vergogna teco porte.

E nota ben questa sentenza mia:  
tu conosci tuo cor, non del compagno,  
non voler mai usar tal fantaxia.

Fa' che tu sie de malizia magno  
si tu voi aver seguito in tal arte.  
Arai bon fruto de cotal guadagno.

Ancora nota e intende questa parte:  
chi vol de l'arte a tucti contrastare,  
de le mille una imbrattarà sue carte,

cusì perde l'honor per un sol fallare.  
Tal crede star di sopra che è di sotto  
e questo sole spesso altrui scontrare;

spesso si fa con esso altrui barbotto,  
contrastando se vene a custione:  
demostra qui cului che in l'arte è dotto.

Se la lingua tagliasse per ragione,  
e fesse ancora lei como la spada,  
seria infinite morte le persone.

Et fa' che de la mente tua non cada  
che piglie con ragion el tuo defendere  
e con iustizia iustamente vada.

Chi vol senza ragion altrui offendere  
danna l'anima e 'l corpo certamente,  
fa al suo maestro vergogna prendere.

El te bixogna ancora avere a mente  
de portar sempre honore al tuo maestro,  
perché denar non paga tal samente.

Chi vol farsi signor de spada e destro,

de imprendere et de insegnare facci derata  
levando pur da te l'atto sinestro.

Se lialtade serà da te amata  
a Principi e Re tu porai parlare  
per che tal arte da lor si fia oprata.

Perché s'aspetta a lor de governare  
et ciaschedun che iusticia mantene  
de vedoe pupille e d'altre affare.

Quest'arte in summa è capo d'ogni bene,  
per arme se tien sotto le citade  
et fa tenere i populi tutti a freno;

ancor mantene in sé tal dignitade,  
che spesse volte s'è t'alegra el core,  
cacciando pur da te sempre viltade.

Facte acquistar poi thexoro e honore  
et questo passa sopra ogn'altra cossa  
mantente sempre in gratia de signore.

Si tu averai l'arte s'è famoxa  
non serai pover mai in nisciuna parte.  
Questa virtù ch'è tanto glorioxa,

se povertà te mustrarà le carte  
solo una volta poi tu vederai  
abbracciarte ricchezza per tal arte.

Alcuna volta tu te trovarai  
essere a tale commo lume spento:  
non dubitar che tosto tornarai.

Per trovar l'arte no m'è parso stento,  
non dico de la vechia ma la nova,  
che d'averla notata son contento.

Io l'ho tenuta inpregionata a prova,  
commo io la lasso, te giuro in bona fé:  
ella me dà denari e se me giova,  
cusi intervene a chi in virtù si trova.

#### Cap. IV

Quest'arte è tanto nobile et gintile,

ella amaestra l'omo nell'andare,  
fa l'chio presto, ardito e signorile.

Quest'arte t'amaestra a ben voltare  
a 'nsegnare ancora coprire e star forte,  
e taglie e punte insegna el ben parare.

Quanti sonno senza numer morte,  
ché l'arte non gli è stato a lor gradita,  
però han de vita chiuse le lor porte.

Non è magior tesoro che la vita  
e per defe(n)der quella ogniun se ingiegna,  
de ma(n)tenerla quanto po' s'aita.

Lassa la robba e ogni cossa degna,  
defende con quest'arte la persona,  
ne porte honore e glorioxa insegna.

O quanto è coxa laudevole e bona  
apre(n)der st'arte che te costa poco  
e mille volte la vita te dona.

O in quanti modi la ti po' aver loco  
senza cercare se trova costione  
beato è quel che spigne l'altrui foco,

l'arte mia nova et fatta con ragione,  
non dico de la vechia, la qual lasso  
ai nostri antichi con lor opinione.

Se tu non vorai d'honore esser casso,  
misura il tempo tuo e quel del conpagno:  
questo è de l'arte fondamento e passo.

Aprè l'orechie al documento magno  
e fa' che inte(n)de le ragion sì belle  
perché non dagge al tuo maestro lagno.

Fa' che le spade sian sempre sorelle  
quando tu vieni a scrimir con alcuno  
e da poi piglia qual tu voi de quelle.

Non dar vantagio di spada a niuno  
staresti a pericolo d'averne vergogna,  
et questo è quel che de' seguir ciascuno.

Bon ochio, saper, prestezza bixogna,

et se la forza e 'l cor con seco sia  
farai grattar a ciaschedun la rognà.

Intende ben qui la sente(n)za mia:  
l'omo grande fa de spada longezza  
e picol omo la spada curta fia.

Gran forza d'homo le guarde si spezza,  
l'ingegno natural li porge el freno,  
dona al picol homo bona franchezza.

Chi sa assai colpi si porta el veleno,  
chi sa poco, fa con gram faticha,  
a fin ne roman vento e pur da meno.

Et si tu tene el fil de la mia riga  
e pigli di questa arte la ragione,  
a' toi bixogni ti torà di briga.

E nota ben quel che 'l parlar qui pone:  
non palesare i secreti de l'arte  
ché non sie offexo per cotal cagione.

Ancora intende ben quest'altra parte:  
la spada ch'è più longa s'è mortale,  
senza pericol con lei non poi adoprarti;

fa' che la sia a la misura eguale,  
comme te ho dicto nel capitol primo  
del nostro libro che de sopra sale.

La spada da doi mane sola stimo  
e quella sola adopro a mia bisogna,  
de cui cantando nel mi libro rimo.

E se tu non vorai aver vergogna,  
contra più d'uno briga non pigliare:  
ché farai verso d'altro che sampogna.

Si forza te stregnesse avere a fare  
con più d'uno, fa' che te sia a mente  
de pre(n)der spada che la possi oprare.

Torai arma lieve e non pesante  
acciò che l'abii tutta in tua balia,  
che per grevezza non te porga stente.

Alor bixogna che piglij altra via,

che tu lassi la punta e che tu adopre  
altri ferire per ritornare al quia,  
como udirai nella sente(n)za mia.

Cap. V  
De punte e tagli

La spada sia una punta con doi taglie,  
però ben nota e intende questo scripto  
ché la memoria tua non s'abarbaglie:

l'uno sie el falso e l'altro sie el diritto  
e la ragione si comanda e vole  
che questo tenghe nel cervel tuo fitto

deritto col deritto in seme tole  
el reverso col falso in seme sia  
salvo el fendente lo diritto vole

Intende bene la scriptura mia  
septi colpi son che la spada mena  
sei tagli con la punta quel seria

Acciò che tu ritrovi questa vena  
doi de sopra e de sotto e dui mezane  
La punta per mezzo con inganne e pena,  
che l'aer nostro fa spesso serena

Cap. VI  
Li septi colpi de la spada

Semo fendenti et famo costione  
de fendere e tagliare spesso con pena  
testa e denti con deritta ragione

Ed ogni guardia che se fa terrena  
rompemo spesso con lo nostro ingegno  
passando l'una e l'altra senza pena

Colpi facem de sanguinoso segno  
se noi ne mescolamo con la rota  
tutta l'arte farem nostro sustegno

Fendente, de ferir noi damo dota,  
tornamo in guardia ancor di varcho in varcho  
tardi non semo de ferir, qui nota.

Io sò la rota e tengo i(n) me tal carcho  
se con altri colpi me vò mescolare:  
io metterò la punta spesso a l'archo

Lieltà e cortesia non posso usare  
rotando passo per deritte fendente  
e guasto braccia e man senza tardare

Rota me chiama per nome la giente  
la falsità de spada vo cercando  
chi m'adopra gli aguzzo la mente.

Semo volanti sempre attraversando  
è dal gienochio in su nostro ferire  
fendente e punte spesso ne dà bando

Per trave(r)so noi passa a non falire  
la rota che de sotto in su percote  
e col fendente ne scalda le gote.

#### Cap. VII De la punta

Io son colei che facio custione  
a tuti i colpi e chiamome la punta:  
porto il veleno como el scorpione

e sentomi s' forte, ardita e pronta  
spesso le poste fazio svariare  
quando altri pur me getta e che s'affronta  
e per mal toccho niun quando sum gionta

#### Cap. VIII Costione di tagli e punte

La rota coi fendente et coi volante  
dicon contra le ponte e s' li mostra  
che le non sonno pricoloxe tante.

E quando vengon' a la presentia nostra,  
tutti i colpi li fan smarrir la strada,  
perdendo pur el ferrir per quella giostra.

Non perde volta el colpo della spada:  
poco val la punta a chi presto volta  
se fan far largo i colpi pur che i vada.

Si tu non hai la memoria sciolta,  
se la punta non fere perde el trato  
tute gli altri ferrir là te ne scolta.

Contra un sol la punta trova patto,  
e contra più non fa già il suo dovere:  
questo rechiede el documento et l'atto.

Se punta butta rota non temere,  
se subito non piglia el bon fendente  
remane senza fructo al mio parere.

Chi fa che ponghe un poco la tua mente,  
se punta intrata non ha presto usita,  
te fa el compagno de ferrir dolente.

Tagliando un colpo tua spada è perita  
se punta nel ferrire perde strada  
o 'n deritta croce di sotto t'aita.

Ricto fendente farotte de spada  
e tirarotte de tal posta fora,  
acciò che in mal punto tu te n' vada.

Non perder tempo ad imparare un'ora  
i tempi grandi con la man serena,  
te pone sopra gli altri e sì te onora.

Rompe ogni guarda ch'è fatta terena  
guardie terrene aspectan piccol carcho  
e si le grave passan senza pena.

Arma greve non passa presto al varcho,  
la leve va e ven como frezza in l'archo.

## Cap. IX De la croce

Io son la croce col nome de iesù  
che dereto e denanti vo segnando  
per retrovare molte defexe più.

Si con altr'arma io me vo scontrando,  
non perdo camin, tanto son de prova;  
questo spesso m'aven, ch'io el vo cercando.



E quando un'arma longa s'è me trova,  
chi con ragion farà la mia difesa  
arà l'honore de ciascaduna imprexa.

Cap. X  
Ragione di meza spada

Volendo nui seguir questa degna opra,  
bixogna dechiarar a parte a parte  
tutti i ferrir de l'arte.

Acciò che ben se intenda e che s'adopra,  
la ragion vol che prima ve descopra

Del rotare principio de la spada.  
E' con braccia stexe vada

Menando el fil per mezzo del compagno.  
Et si tu voi parer nell'arte magno,

tu poi andare alor de guarda in guarda  
con man serena e tarda,

con passi che non sian for el comuno.  
Si tu facessi stramazzone alcuno,

fara'l con poca volta 'nanti al volto.  
Non far già largo molto

perché ogni largo tempo s'è perduto.  
Fa che'l reverso te sia poi in aiuto,

passando for de strada col pe' stanco,  
tirando el deritto ancho,

avendo l'ochio sempre al ben parare.  
Quando vorai a mezza spada entrare

commo el compagno leva la sua spada,  
alor non stare a bada

tempo pigliar che non te coste caro  
fa' che tu sie in guardia de cenghiaro

quando tu entre con la punta al vixo,  
non star punto divixo,

voltando presto el reverso fendente  
e tira el dritto e fa' te sia a mente.

Acciò che intende la mia intenzione  
con chiara ragione,

spero mostrarti interamente el verso.  
Non vo' che in tutto sia puro reverso

né sia fendente, ma tra l'altro e l'uno  
sia tra quel comune,

martelando la testa in ogni lato.  
Ancor t'avixo, quando serai intrato

che con le gambe tu t'acconci paro:  
serai Signor e chiaro

de stregnere e ferire arditamente:  
et quando trai el reverso fendente

piga el gienochio stanco e, nota el scritto,  
destende el piè dritto

senza mutarlo alora in altro lato.  
Alora se intende essere attaccato

il piè stanco con la testa adesso  
perché li sta più apresso

che non fa el ritto che roman traverso.  
Alor tu sei segur per ogni verso

e se vuoi el fendente ritto trare,  
te bixogna pigliare

el gienochio ritto: e stende ben el stanco.  
Chiamarasse la testa attaccata ancho

col piè dritto che gli è più vicino:  
questo è miglior camino

che non è el passeggiar di nostri antichi.  
Non bixogna ch'alcun contrasti o dichi,

perché tu sei più forte et più sicuro  
a la difesa duro,

E con più breve tempo a far la guerra  
Né non po' farte ancor chasschare in terra.

Cap. XI  
Ragion de giocho de spada

Quando tu sei a mezza spada gionto

Facendo tu el diritto o voi el reverso  
farai che piglie el verso

di quel ch'io dico poi che sei al ponto:  
se tu vi steggie, tien pur l'ochio pronto

e fa la vista brive con coverta  
et tien la spada erta,

che sopra el capo tuo le braccie gioche.  
Non posso dire con parole poche,

perché gli effecti son de mezza spada.  
Acciò che più ti agrada,

quando tu pare, para de fendente,  
scosta la spada un poco acortamente

da te, calcando quella del compagno.  
Tu fai pur bon guadagno

parando bene i colpi tucti quanti.  
Quando pare el reverso porge inanti

el destro piede, e para come ditto,  
parando tu el drito

porai inanzi poi el tuo piè stancho.  
El te bixogna aver la mente ancho

quando tu trai el reverso fendente,  
aver l'ochio prudente

Ch'il mandritto non venisse sotto.  
Et si el compagno tresse, et tu de botto

para facendo poi a la testa cenno  
col fil falso e col senno

commo 'l alza, tira el bon riverso,  
de sotto in su le braccia sua attraverso,

redopiando poi el deritto presto.  
E nota ancor questo:

che tu non falle la ragion de l'arte.  
Si tu traesti el deritto allora guarte

dal manriverso suo che non te dia.  
Fa che tua spada sia

col fendente a parara che non te coglia  
e se pur te venisse allora voglia

de intrar sotto e pigliar suo mantenere  
e farli poi el dovere,

col pomo martelando al suo mustaccio,  
guardando bene che tu non piglii impaccio.

Cap. XII  
Ragion de viste de spada

Ancor t'avixo e notta el mio dir bene,

che quando sei a mezza spada intrato  
tu poi bem da ogni lato,

seguendo l'arte col bom visteggiare.  
Se chiamano le viste un offuscare

che offuscha altrui nel defendere,  
non lssa comprendere

quel che da un di lati vogli fare.  
Io non te posso cusì bem mostrare

col mio parlare como faria con spada;  
fa' che tua mente vada

investigando l'arte col mio dire  
et pigliarai con la ragion l'ardire.

Da po ch'io te amonischo et ch'io te insegno  
e fa che con ingegno

tu segue quel che io in tanti versi scrivo  
per retrovar nell'arte e 'l fondo e 'l rivo.

Cap. XIII  
Ragion de mezza spada

Essendo tu pur gionto a meza spada,

tu po' ben più et più volte martelare  
da un sol lato trare

da l'altra parte le tue viste vada,  
e commo perde, col parar, sua strada,

e tu martella poi da l'altra parte;  
alora tu comparte

qual stretta te bixogna a ciò finire  
e si pur tu volesti trar ferire,

lassali andar el fendente reverso,  
voltandoli atraverso

e filo falso con la punta al vixo.  
Non esser già da lui punto devixo,

col reverso o col dirito ancora,  
con qual tu voi lavora,

purché i gienochie pighen da ogni lato,  
secondo che de sopra t'ò mostrato.

Io te replico ancor questa gionta:  
sempre entra con la punta,

Di sotto in su fino al vixo inforcando,  
e i tuoi ferriri adopra a tempo quando.

Cap. XIII  
Ragion di mezzo tempo de spada

Io non te posso, scrivendo, mustrare

del mezo tempo la ragione, e 'l modo,  
perché roman nel nodo

la brevità del tempo e del suo trare.  
El mezzo tempo è solo uno svoltare

de nodo: presto, e subito al ferrire.  
E raro po' falire

quando e'l fatto con bona misura;  
e si tu noterai la mia scriptura,

mal separa chi non n'ha la praticacha:  
spesso la volaricha

rompe con bon filo l'altrui cervello.  
De tucta l'arte questo si è el giuiello,

perché in un tracto el ferrissi e para.  
O quanto è coxa cara

a praticarlo con buona ragione,  
e facte portar de l'arte el gonfalone.

Cap. XV

Ragion di spada contra la rota

Molti son che fan lor fondamento

nel roteggiar ben forte da ogne lato;  
fa che ti sie avixato

Como sua spada roteggiando move,  
e tu roteggia et vinceraì le prove.

Accordate con seco alor nel trare  
e fa che sia tuo andare

con la tua spada dereto a la sua.  
Per chiarir meglio la fantaxia tua,

ancor poi andare in dente de cenghiare,  
et se lui col rotare,

e tu scharpando pur de sotto in su  
ode e comprehende le mie ragione tu

che sei novo nell'arte e puro asperto,  
e vo' che tu sie certo

che questa è l'arte e la scienza vera.  
Piglia questo, che un tracto di stadera

se starà el compagno in porta de ferro,  
questo nel cor te serro,

fa che tu sie in posta sagittaria.  
Guarda che la punta tua non svara,

che del compagno copra la sua spada,  
va' un poco for de strada

drizzando spada e mano con punta.  
quando tua spada a la croce sia giunta,

alor fa' la terza decima stretta,  
como t'apare schietta

dipinta la nostro libro a sette carte.  
Ti poi adoprar ancor in questa arte

ferrire e strette che te sien più destre  
lassa la più sinestre,

tiente a quel che la man te dà favore  
che spesso te farà ne l'arte onore.

## Cap. XVI

### Amaestramento de spada

Bixogna che la spada s'è te sia

un targone s'è copra tucto.  
Or piglia questo fructo,

el qual te dono per tua maestria.  
Guarda che mai spada tua non stia,

facendo guardie né ferrir, lontana.  
O quanto è coxa sana

che la tua spada breve corso faccia.  
Fa' che la punta guardi nella faccia

al compagno o voi ferire  
tu li torai l'ardire,

vedendoxe star sempre punta inante  
e farai el giocho tuo sempre davante.

co' la tua spada e con piccola volta,  
con man serena e sciolta,

rompendo spesso il tempo del compagno  
ordirai tela d'altro che di ragno.

TELOS



## PARTE ILLUSTRATA

Pag. 15 recto

(compasso sul capo)

Io sono un sexto che fo partimenti.  
O scrittore ascolta mia ragione.  
Cusì misura el tempo simelmente.

(orso sulla spalla destra)

Il natural de l'orso si è el girare.  
In qua in la in su in giu andare.  
Cusì conviene che tua spalla faccia.  
Poi la tua spada fa che metti a caccia.

(drago sulla mano destra)

La man dirita vol eser prudente.  
Ardita e mortal cum un serpente.

(montone sulla spalla sinistra)

Io son un muntone e sto sempre a mirare.  
Che per natura sempre voglio cozare.  
Così convien tuo taglio sia inginioso.  
Sempre parar quando sera resposo.

(levriero sulla mano sinistra)

Con la man stanca la spada ò per punta.  
Per far ferire d'ezza quando serà giunta.  
E se tu voi sto ferir sia intero.  
Fa che sia presto come levorero.

(occhio sul cuore)

L'ochio col cor vole star attento.  
Ardito e pieno di providimento.

(chiavi sulle ginocchia)

E chi queste chiavi cum seco non averà.  
Acquesto giuoco poca guerra farà.  
Le gambe chiave se può ben diri.  
Per che li ti serra e anche ti po aprire.

(sole sul piede destro)

Tu vedi el sol che fa gran giramento.  
E donde el nasce fa suo tornamento.  
El pé com el sol va convien che torni.  
Se voii chel giuoco toa persona adorni.

(torre sul piede sinistro)  
El pié stanco ferma senza paura.  
Como rocha fa che sia costante.  
E poi la tua persona serà tuta sicura.

(ruota dentata sotto i piedi)  
Quando i pié o l'uno o l'altro fa molesta.  
Como rota da molin dia volta presta.  
Bixogna esser il cor providitore.  
C [he -testo abraso-] luj s'aspetta vergogna e l'onore.

Pag. 15 verso

Questi son colpi de spada due mane.  
Non gli è el mezo tempo: nel nodo rimane.

Io son la rota et vo spesso rotando.  
La falsità de spada vo cercando.

Nuii semo volante sempre traversando.  
Dal ginocchi in su andian guastando.

Noii semo fendenti e facemo quostione.  
De fendere i denti con dirita ragione.

Io son la punta pericolosa e presta.  
De gli altri ferire sum suma maestra.

16r

Fig. 1  
Voii seti guardie con li nomi vostre  
Ciascun di vuui lato si dimostre  
(Philippo di Vadi pisano)

Fig. 2

Son mezana porta di ferro forte  
Per dare con punte e fendente la morte

Io son posta di donna e non son vana  
Che lungeza di spada spesso inghana

16v

Fig. 1

Son porta di fero piana terrena

Che taglie e punte sempre si rafrena

Son posta di falcon superba e altera  
Per far difesa a ciascuna manera

Fig. 2

Son posta breve di spada longeza  
Spesso ferisco con lei torno in freza

Son posta sagitaria per ingiegno  
Uso m(a)litia assai nel mio regno

17r

Fig. 1

Io son la posta di vera finestra  
Leva de l'arte la cossa sinistra

Io son corona e son fatta maestra  
De legature mi ritrovo destra

Fig. 2

Con mortal posta de denti cinghiare  
Chi cerca briga assa(i) gl'in posso dare

Son posta lunga con la spada curta  
Che con l'ingiegno mio i colpi urta

17v

Fig. 1

Son posta frontal tanto sicura  
De tagli e punte mai non farò cura

Son posta posta di cingiaro e son di fora  
Che de ferire mai non farò dimora

Fig. 2

El reverso fendente ho tratto sul pè stanco  
senza scambiar pè voltando el galone  
Trarò el dritto senza moverme anco

18r

Fig. 1

Per sto pigliare di brazo chio t'ò fato  
di taglio o pomo ti donerò un trato

Fig. 2

Per la volta fata a mia spada presta  
con quella di feriri non farò resta

18v

Fig. 1

lo t'ò per parte riversa ligato  
per colpo di spada serai aterrato

Fig. 2

Per tal modo tengo con la man stanca  
A ferire taglii e punte non manca

19r

Fig. 1

Per tale volta ch'i' ò a mia spada data  
meza la gola credo avere tagliata

Fig. 2

Tu anderaii per terra a tal partito  
Però che hai el giuoco tutto falito

19v

Fig. 1

Con la mia spada non voglio far guerra  
Ma con la tua te metterò in terra

Fig. 2

lo t'ò volto per forza e senza inpazo  
Con mi destreza te ronperò el brazo

20r

Fig. 1

Con destreza t'ò posto a simil atto  
Faroti andare in terra al primo tratto

Fig. 2

Per questa forma t'ò messo in la chiave  
E romperoti el brazo al diri d'un ave

20v

Fig. 1

Per sto voltar di pomo io t'ò ligato  
E subito s'io voglio io t'ò aterrato

Fig. 2

Per sto voltar de mella che tu hai fatto  
Romperoti el brazo al primo tratto

21r

Fig. 1

Per la volta data a mia spada presta  
Feriroti le braza over la testa

Fig. 2

S'io metto el mio mantener a la tua spada  
Chascar te la farò per questa fiada

21v

Fig. 1

Questo è una presa ch'io facio de fora  
Chascar te la farò a prima botta

Fig. 2

Tu credesti ch'io tresse el man reverso  
Col gomito spingo tua spada atraverso

22r

Fig. 1

Per la volta ch'el mio mantener ha dato  
Chascar te farò in terra riversato

Fig. 2

Questo è un tor de spada ch'è soprano  
E se io vorò ti metterò al piano

22v

Fig. 1

La vista feci di trar un fendente  
Taiaroti la masciella coi denti

Fig. 2

Nel trar d'il man reverso ch'io t'ò fato

Daroti del mio pomo con bel atto

23r

Fig. 1

Questa è una presa ch'io te facio dentro  
In terra anderai com'io sento

Fig. 2

Io t'ò dato de la spada mia in la testa  
La tua te torrò co' mio ingiegno presta

23v

Fig. 1

De meza mella rebatto tua spada  
Del pomo mio haverai bona derada

Fig. 2

Voltando el man riverso mal parasti  
De meza mella nel ligame intrasti

24r

GUARDIE D'AZA IN ARME

Fig. 1

Son posta di dona de grande offesa  
Per rispondere a ciaschaduna impresa

So in posta di cingiaro con il dir sona  
Te guastarò per certo tua persona

Fig. 2

Io mi chiamo posta sagitaria  
Faci sempre c'ogni colpo svaria

Son posta di croce così chiamata  
De tagli e punte non temo derata

24v

Fig. 1

Io era in dente de cinghial con l'aza  
Per questo io t'ò ferito nela faccia

Fig. 2

Levata la visera io t'ò nel volto  
Io t'ò ferito ogni difesa ò tolto

25r

Fig. 1

T'ò la mano sotto el brazo drito  
Te meterò in la chiave come scritto

Fig. 2

La presa ch'io ti facio serà questa  
Perderai l'aza e ferirò la testa

26r

## GURDIE DI SPADA IN ARME

Fig. 1

Io son sotana posta serpentina  
Che de ferire de ponte son purpina

Son posta de leopardo sereno  
Che con la coda te darò el veleno

Fig. 2

Io sum serpentino e sto di sopra  
Alto e baso facendo la mia opra

Son coda di leopardo sopra el brazo  
Ciascuna spada da me levo e scacio

26v

Fig. 1

Io son il primo feritore de l'arte  
Per far difesa in ciascaduna parte

Fig. 2

Io spingo al volto tuo la mia punta  
Tu vedi che mia spada ognor più monta

27r

Fig. 1

La spada vo' che lasci al tuo dispetto

Faroti pegio ancor per tuo difeto

Fig. 2

Se non posso al volto tuo meter punta  
Meterò pomo poii che l'è qui gionta

27v

Fig. 1

Per lo passare mio for de strada  
te meterò per terra con tua spada

Fig. 2

FORMA DE SPADA IN ARME

La spada da conbatere in arme vole avere la sotoscrita forma cioè la sua longeza vole arivare el pomo sotto el bracio, tagliare quatro dita in punta, el suo manico vole eser de una spana. L'elzo vol essere longo qua(n)to è il manico de la spada: e vol essere aguzo da ogni lato, e similmente vol essere aguzo il pomo per possere ferire con ognuno de questi.

28r

GIOCO DE LANZA LONGA

Fig. 1

Per corta lanza aspetto  
a sto partito  
A corta e longa tenerò l'invito

Fig. 2

Per lo modo con la lanza t'aspetto  
Con meza volta te ferirò il peto

28v

Fig. 1

Per meza volta che mia lanza à dato  
Te ferirò nel peto o nel costato

Fig. 2

Qui finiscono i ferir de lanza  
Se mete a tal partito per usanza

29r

Fig. 1

Questo contrario che io te facio



S'le per voltarti la presa d'il bracio

Fig. 2

Per la man che tu hai sopra la spalla  
Tu anderai in terra in ora malla

29v

Fig. 1

La daga tor te posso e ferire  
In questa presa e non porà falire

Fig. 2

La daga in terra ti farò cadere  
Con la volta ch'io farò e col sapere

30r

Fig. 1

Questa punta sie subito fataa  
Farò cadere la daga molto ratta

Fig. 2

Questa ponta in la man t'ò metuta  
Tosto la daga te serà caduta

30v

Fig. 1

Questa coverta io farò ben tosto  
Che tu serai in la chiave posto

Fig. 2

A un gioco saltarò per mi coverta  
E con mia daga farò la via aperta

31r

Fig. 1

Per questa coverta che tu voi fare  
In la chiave di soto ti farò intrare

Fig. 2

Si posso tor la daga ancho ferire  
Se l'arte non vorò in tuto falire

31v

Fig. 1  
S'io carco la daga verso terra  
Con quella non me farai più guerra

Fig. 2  
Qui cerco la tua man per lei feri(ri)  
Sotto la chiave te farò veniri

32r

Fig. 1  
Questo incrociare che verso te i' facio  
Te metterò in la chiave con impaccio

Fig. 2  
Questo ferire con lo pugno faccio  
La daga tua nel corpo te caccio

32v

Fig. 1  
l' facio la coperta d'una mano  
Farò che tua daga anderà al piano

Fig. 2  
Per lo modo ch'io t'ò preso non dubito  
Tu anderai in terra dico subito

33r

Fig. 1  
Al modo ch'io te tengo so' disposto  
Romperte el bracio e la daga più tosto

Fig. 2  
Tu vedi bene a modo ch'io te tegno  
Che tu e tua daga serà mio pegno

33v

Fig. 1  
Io vedo questo gioco non me falla  
Ch'io rompa el bracio sopra mia spalla

Fig. 2  
Per questo modo el bracio vo pigliare  
Per quella daga te farò serrare

34r

Fig. 1

Vedi che sei astretto e in terra vai  
Rompo il braccio e la daga perderai

Fig. 2

A questo modo tengo e faccio carico  
E posso poi seguirli el stretto e largo

34v

Fig. 1

Io vengo a te con le braccia incrociate  
E posso fare tutti i giochi passati

Fig. 2

Andarai in terra per man riversa  
Per questo gioco avrai la vita persa

35r

Fig. 1

Tu sei ne l'arte dico assai mal dotto  
Te troverai in terra qui de botto

Fig. 2

Per questa presa io disse co' io t'ave  
Io son certo che intrarai in la chiave

35v

Fig. 1

Io farò un carico a questo tuo cubbitto  
Romperoti el braccio senza dubbio

Fig. 2

Questo è un guastare di braccio molto forte  
El dolor, che tu hai mal el comporte

36r

Fig. 1

Io t'ò messo in la chiave al tuo dispetto  
Perché non sei ne l'arte sì perfeto

Fig. 2

Co' la man dritta ò fatto cotal mossa

Te farò ficar la daga nela cossa

36v

Fig. 1

Quando in terra serai ti porai dire  
Io non credea già così venire

Fig. 2

Questo è un metere in terra ch'è assai forte  
Volendo io tu poi ricevere morte

37r

Fig. 1

Io te tengo in modo al mio parere  
In terra anderai contra el tuo volere

Fig. 2

El ti bixogna puro andar in terra  
E con la dagaga non farai più guerra

37v

Fig. 1

Per lo passare fato soto el bracio  
In terra te porò con molto inpacio

Fig. 2

MESURA DE DAGA

La longeza de la daga vol essere fin a el gomito con un taglio e dui cantoni, el manico  
vol esser d'uno somesso como apare la forma d'essa dopenta qui di sotto

38r

Fig. 1

Io mi difendo puro quanto poso  
Como tu traii io te verò adoso

Fig. 2

Como tu lance el colpo serà perso  
Rebaterò tua arma col reverso

38 v

Fig. 1

Io sono in guardia col bon man dirito  
Io me tu lance intenderaii lo scritto

Fig. 2

Seguitando l'opra precede alcuni partiti de daga como seguita: bixogna considerare l'ato la presa el principio el finire, per volere intendere el modo: avixo e quanto sia l'ingiegno de l'humana natura e però ognuno che sia pratico nell'arte porà intendere tutti gli altri dopinti e posti in questa mia opereta e prima de spada, aza, lanza e daga.

In tutte le pagine seguenti, a partire da 39r:

Fig. 1

Partito de daga

Fig. 2

Finiri del partito

## GLOSSARY

In the following analysis a specific terminology, typical of historical fencing, is sometimes used. It is borrowed from authors of the early Renaissance, such as A. Marozzo, A. Manciolino, G. Dalle Agocchie, G. Di Grassi, C. Agrippa, and it has the peculiarity of being very clear and precise.

Therefore we have decided to include a short glossary.

### ABBREVIATIONS

Right/Left – fencer on the right / on the left

r. / l. – abbreviation of “right” and “left”

### THE SWORD

True edge/False edge - the true edge is the one which looks to the ground keeping the sword in hand in the most natural way, and it is the edge with which it is more instinctive to strike; the false edge is the other edge of the sword, the one which, with the sword in the same position, looks up.

Manciolino, Book I, page 10: “And because the sword has two edges; the one which looks at your enemy is called the true edge and the one which looks at you is called the false edge”.

Viggiani, Book III page 55: “You know very well what true edge and false edge are, that when having the double edged sword by your side, the edge that looks down is the true edge, the one that looks to the upper parts of the body, to the air, is the false edge”.

Strong, medium, weak of the blade – They are the three parts of the blade, respectively, the one near to the hilt, the one in the middle and the one near to the point.

### THE BLOWS

- Blows – they are the different ways through which you can hit with a side arm, and they can be divided into cuts and thrusts.

Viggiani, Book II, pages 55/57

- Half blows – they are blows which do only half of the way of the normal blows and they are usually used for the techniques in half-time, or in order to parry with a counter-cut.

- Cuts – blows which are made with the edge of the sword. They can be divided into blows of the true edge and blows of false edge, and into mandritto cuts, which go from the right to the left side, and roverso or rovescio cuts, which go from the left to the right side. They can also be.....
- Dritto or Mandritto cuts (Fiore dei Liberi, Vadi, Marozzo, Manciolino ecc) – they are blows which go from the right side to the left side of the fencer who is throwing a blow (it does not matter if they are thrown with the right or the left hand, in case of left-handed people or in case of use of a secondary weapon).

If the term is used without any specification it is supposed to be a sgualembro or a tondo.

Manciolino: “If you will throw your enemy a blow... wherever you want to, if the blow is thrown on the left parts of the enemy it is called mandritto”.

Viggiani, Book III, pages 55/56: “...all those blows which arrive from the right parts of the person, with the right foot forward, and the left as well, they will all be mandrittos, having their start from the right parts, as well as from the upper to the lower side; and from the lower to the upper side; & they will have their end in the left parts.”

- Roverso or rovescio blows (Viggiani, Fiore Dei Liberi, Manciolino, Marozzo): blows which go from the left side to the right side of the one who throws them (it does not matter if they are thrown with the right or the left hand, in the case of left-handed people or in case of use of a secondary weapon).

If the term is used without any specification, it is supposed to be a sgualembro or a tondo.

Manciolino, Book I, page 56: “if you will throw that (a blow)... in his right parts, be it either lower or upper blow, you will call it roverso blow.”

Viggiani, Book III, page 56: “...& all those blows which come from the left part of the waist, & they are thrown to the right parts, upper or lower, they will be called roverso blows.”

“...& it is called roverso blow because it is born from the reverse part of the mandritto blow.”

- Fendente: vertical downward stroke (Fiore Dei Liberi, Manciolino, Marozzo, Viggiani) – it is a cut blow which go downwards from above.

It can be a mandritto blow (which is charged from the right shoulder to the head or the left shoulder of the enemy) or a roverso stroke (which is charged from the left shoulder and goes to the head or the right shoulder of the enemy).

Not all the authors use this kind of division: Manciolino, Book I, page 10: “And when raising the sword between those two blows (dritto and rovescio) that’s to say straight with the point turned downwards, this blow will be called Fendente.”

On the contrary Fiore Dei Liberi and Vadi make use of the division between dritti and rovesci, but in their treatises each blow which goes from above downwards is called Fendente, avoiding every division between fendente and sgualembro (see also in the Flos Duellatorum the representation of cuts).

- Sgualembro (Dalle Agocchie), sgualembrato (Marozzo, Manciolino) – it's a diagonal blow which goes from the upper right side to the lower left side (sgualembro dritto) or from the upper left to the lower right side (sgualembro rovescio).

Manciolino, in his chapter about blows, doesn't make any difference between sgualembro and tondo, but those cuts are simply called "mandritti" or "riversi".

It can be easily supposed that the other authors do the same, when they talk of dritto and rovescio without any further specification.

- Tondo (Marozzo, Viggiani, Dall'Agocchie) or Mezzano (Fiore Dei Liberi), Volante in Vadi (with the difference that the Volante rovescio should be thrown with the false edge for Vadi, contrarily to the other authors) – horizontal cut blow, dritto or rovescio.
- Ridoppio – it's a blow which goes diagonally from the lower to the upper side (Marozzo and Dalle Agocchie) with the true edge: the dritto ridoppio goes from the right lower to the left upper side, and the rovescio ridoppio goes from the left lower to the right upper side.

On the contrary Viggiani calls it "sgualembrato ascendente" (ascending sgualembrato).

- Tramazzone, stramazzone (Vadi, Manciolino, Marozzo) – it's a blow which is thrown with a "mulinello" (moulinet) of the wrist (called by several authors "hand knot") which can have an inclination that goes from a fendente to a tondo.

Dall'Agocchie: "tramazzone is the movement you do with the knot of your hand, like a moulinet."

Manciolino: "tramazzone, the movement you do with the knot of the hand that holds the sword, the one that goes from the lower to the upper side doing a moulinet (unknotting is the word actually used by Manciolino) near to your left parts like with a fendente" (Manciolino describes only the tramazzone mandritto because in that specific point he speaks of the sword and the buckler, preventing the last one from throwing a tramazzone roverso).

Marozzo, chapter 93: "...you'll throw a roverso in the action of a moulinet: that's to say a roverso tramazzon...".

- Falso, Rota (Vadi) – it's a cut blow which goes diagonally from the lower to the upper side, with the false edge: the falso dritto goes from the right lower to the left upper side, the falso rovescio, or manco, goes from the left lower to the right upper side.

Manciolino does not make any clear difference between the falso and the ridoppio, but we suppose that it happens because he always throws his blows with the false edge when he throws upwards from below; he also makes a difference between true edge and false edge (see) and he talks of false edge parries, or "to parry with a falso".

Manciolino, Book I, page 10: "...every single blow that you throw from the ground against the face of your enemy, it doesn't matter if from your right or left side, it will be called Falso".



Viggiani, Book III, page 57: "...And if you will be wounded with the false edge, it will be added the specification "falso" to all the other names, saying falso mandritto, falso rovescio, falso mandritto tondo, falso mandritto sgualebrato, falso fendente, & therefore "falso" will be added to every name".

Even the "sotano" of Fiore Dei Liberi, doesn't make any difference between the true edge and the false edge cuts, while the "rota" of Vadi seems to be made only with the false edge, and he does not consider rising blows with the true edge.

- Montante – a blow which goes vertically upwards from below, with the false edge.

Manciolino, Book I, page 10: "... it is called montante because it is thrown vertically from the lower to the upper side with the false edge, to Guardia Alta (High Guard, see it represented in Marozzo's treatise).

- Thrusts: they are blows thrown with the point of the sword and they are divided into dritto or rovescio thrusts, descending, (called also sopramano, overhand), "ferme" (horizontal thrusts) or ascending (called also sottomano, underhand).

Viggiani, Book III, page 57: "If one will wound with the point, or with the dritto thrusts, it will be called "punta diritta" (dritto thrust), or from the left parts, it will be called "punta rovescia" (roverso thrust): if the "punta diritta" goes from the upper to the lower side it will be called "descending dritto thrust", or if it goes from the lower to the upper it will be called "ascending dritto thrust", or "punta diritta" (straight thrust), finish it in the right part of the body, or in the left one: if it goes directly it will be called "punta ferma diritta" (horizontal straight thrust): it is not the same of the roverso thrust."

- Stoccata – ascending dritto thrust. Viggiani, Book II, page 57: "...the punta diritta can go from the upper to the lower side... or viceversa, it will be called ascending dritto thrust or stoccata ..."

On the contrary Manciolino says that stoccata is a synonymous of thrust.

Manciolino, Book I, page 10: "Stoccata, that's to say Thrust." And also, ibidem: "And if you will push the point versus the enemy the blow will be called Stoccata, either with the right foot or the left one, either sopramano or sottomano."

- Imbroccata –dritto thrust sopramano, i.e. descending; Viggiani calls it "Colpo Magno" (Great Blow) (Book III, page 73).

Di Grassi, page 29: "The most safe blow that one can throw is the imbroccata; it must be in direct line and must end in "guardia bassa" (low guard)..." (see also Di Grassi's representation of the High Guard at page 18, that is the starting position for an imbroccata).

- Falso impuntato – punta infalsata (falso thrust), it's an ascending diagonal false edge blow that becomes an horizontal thrust: Marozzo, chapter 93 "you'll push with a "punta infalsata": that's to say turning the wrist throwing a rovescio against the enemy and when you will throw the rovescio I want you to protect yourself, that's to say thrusting the point versus the face of your enemy..." and chapter 95: "... you'll throw a falso impuntato ...".

- “Punta in atto di montante” (montante thrust) – it is similar to the “falso impuntato”, but the edge blow is not a falso but a montante: not diagonally ascending but vertically ascending.

## THE PARRIES

- Coverta (Cover) – generic word which stands for “defensive action”, such as a parry, any kind of blade displacing action or even a voiding movement.
- Parata di croce, incrosare (Cross-parry, crossing, in Flos Duellatorum and Vadi, then in Agrippa) – it’s a parry which blocks the opponent’s blow, and it’s done with the true edge of the forte of the sword, if possible even against the forte of the enemy. The two swords must form a cross (for example a vertical blow and a horizontal parry or viceversa). Usually that parry takes the form of a counter-cut: to the cut of the enemy corresponds a half-cut of the defending fencer, thrown to the opponent’s sword to stop it. In fact some strength is needed to stop a cut thrown with a real sword. However, a fencer must always be careful not to take his sword too far from him, that’s why the counter-cut is always a half-cut, very different from a normal cut aimed to the opponent’s body, thrown with the arms extended and with strength.
- False edge parry – it’s a parry which displaces the blow of the opponent pushing it out with the false edge of the defender’s sword. It’s the most known parry of the traditional Bolognese School (Marozzo, Manciolino, Dalle Agocchie).
- “In piovere” parry (rain-parry) – it’s a parry that puts the point of the sword downwards while raising the hand before crossing the opponent’s blow. The parry is made in a position similar to the XIX century sabre Hanging Guard. Di Grassi, page 120: “...when defending the high cuts or thrusts with the sword that goes towards the ground; it’s done when while, defending, one raises the hand, thrusting the point of the sword down...”.

## FOOTWORK

- The step, or full step. Like in a normal walking step, you put ahead the foot that was previously behind. Here, however, you change the side of your body with which you face the opponent, passing from one guard to another.
- The lunge. A known fencing movement, in which you extend the leg behind pushing ahead the other one. In Medieval and Renaissance fencing usually lunges are not so long, so extreme like in modern fencing, but they are a shorter and more prudent movement.
- The half-step. Any kind of movement in which you advance without changing the foot that is ahead.  
There are two kinds of half-step.

The first, that we call “Medieval” is exactly like a modern fencing step, i.e. a short lunge in which the back foot doesn’t stay firm but follows the other, recovering the original guard position. It is used by Fiore dei Liberi and Vadi.

The second, that we call “Renaissance” half-step is much used by the Bolognese school: you bring the back foot ahead close to the other one, then you bring the front foot ahead, recovering the original distance between both feet.

- The side-step (and side half-step): it is a diagonal step, in the direction of the leading foot: to the right if you step with the right foot and viceversa.

- The cross-step (and cross half-step): it is a diagonal step on the direction opposite to the leading foot: to the left if you step with the right foot and viceversa.

In order to keep a good balance during this difficult step, the fencer puts his foot on the ground perpendicularly to the direction of the step, i.e. side-ways, and puts all his weight on it before going on with the following step.

In fact you can’t stop on a cross-step, it is a purely transit step, to which another step has to follow immediately.

## TIME

- (Fencing) Time – it’s the time used to throw a blow starting from a guard and finishing in another one.

Viggiani, Book III, page 64: “...while throwing a mandritto, a rovescio or a thrust, you are in guard: when you have thrown the blow you’re in another guard: the time that passes between the two blows is a time: that’s because that blow is a continuative action and it’s in one time...”.

- Mezzo tempo (half time) – it’s the time which corresponds the half blow. It is said that one wounds in mezzo tempo when you hit the opponent while he’s throwing a blow himself, and before he can hit with it.

Viggiani, BOOK III, page 64: “...and a mezzo tempo will be...a half rovescio, a half mandritto. And every little moving of the person is a mezzo tempo...when the adversary tries to thrust...he should wound the enemy in the half of his (the enemy’s) blow with his own half blow: most of the times you’ll wound in half time with a half blow.

## MEASURE

- The first measure is the starting or guard measure, when both fighters are still in their guards, and anyone of them would need a full step to hit the other.

- The next is the measure of the “crossing at the sword’s point”, or standard wide measure, where a contact between the blades can be established, and it is possible to hit with just a lunge or half-step.

Its classic form, that we find in the Flos Duellatorum (19B pic. 1 in the Pisani Dossi manuscript), derives from an attack, when the defender parries stepping back.

In later texts, Marozzo etc., we can find lots of techniques made starting in this measure without any crossing of swords.

In those cases, without leaving our starting guard, we slowly gain ground until we arrive to this measure from the .

- A very important measure is the half-sword (mezza spada) measure, from which we can hit without any footwork (also, we can kick, take the opponent's blade etc.).

The most natural way to come to the half sword is a simple cross-parry, in which the defender doesn't move at all, and this is what we usually see in the Flos Duellatorum. In the Bolognese school it may come out of a light binding blade contact followed by a lunge or half-step.

All the measures indicated until now constitute the "gioco largo" (wide play).

- The "gioco stretto" (close play) is a closer measure, where we can grasp the opponent's hands or arms, we can hit him with pommel blows or wrestle with him, we make trips etc.

We can easily come to the close play from the half sword, closing on the opponent with a step, half-step or a lunge, but we can also find ourselves directly in the close play if the defender steps ahead while parrying.

## **TECHNICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTUAL PART OF VADI'S TREATISE**

### **1 - Vadi's fencing principles.**

#### **I. Footwork**

The first information that Vadi gives is about footwork. The fencer should offer the flank (galone) to the opponent while advancing or coming back. The attack should start from the side to which the fencer is turned: with the advanced left flank one throws a dritto, while if the right flank is turned to the adversary the first blow will be a rovescio (III;16-21).

It is obvious that there will be a perfect coordination between the blows and the steps. While throwing a rovescio one will advance with the left foot stretching the right leg, while when throwing a dritto the right foot will advance (X; 41\_56).

The correct footwork making parries will be the contrary: when stopping a rovescio the right foot will remain ahead, when stopping a dritto the left foot will remain advanced. This method is useful for the "close play", because it is propitious to the left hand grips (XI; 17-20).

Always short (and watchful) steps should be taken (X; 9-12).

#### **II. Blows**

There are seven different blows: two fendenti, two volanti, the rota (two ascending blows) and the thrust. The first three couples are cuts and they are divided into dritti and rovesci by the side they are loaded: from the right side the dritti ones and from the left side the rovesci. The dritto blows are thrown with the true edge, while the rovesci with the false edge, with the exception of the fendente, which always needs

the true edge (V; 4-9). Another difference concerns their function while fighting: the dritti are mostly defensive blows while the rovesci are above all offensive (III; 10-12). Vadi shows the peculiarity of each blow, even if sometimes he simply reports whole lines of the *Flos Duellatorum*.

The fendenti (downward blows thrown with the true edge) have as their target the head of the enemy and they are able to break into the parries executed from the low guards thanks to their strength. They will be more dangerous if alternated with the rota (upward blows thrown with the false edge). The fendenti can break any guard and they are quite safe for the fencer because he is never discovered until the end of the action.

Referring to our Glossary here above, Vadi's fendenti include our fendente and our sgualembro blows, i.e. any blow that goes downwards, be it vertical or diagonal.

The natural conclusion of the dritto fendente is the "posta de denti de cinghiare", while for the fendente rovescio is the "porta di ferro piana terrena" (VI; 1-12).

The blow which originates from these two guards is the rota, that is more effective if mixed up with other blows, in particular with the fendente dritto, as Vadi underlines. The preferred targets are the arms and the hands of the enemy, which are the parts of the body to which the "mezzo tempo" blows thrown with the false edge usually aim (VI; 13-21).

The volanti are mezzani blows, corresponding to the "tondo" blows of our Glossary, which start from the flank of the fencer and stop on the opposite side. Their target is all the body from the knees to the head. The volanti have the peculiarity to be opposed to the thrusts and the fendenti, warding off their attack. This part of the treatise could be also read in the opposite way, but our interpretation is supported by the following lines of the *Flos Duellatorum*, where there's an evident reference to this kind of blows used as parries against the thrust (VI; 22-27): "E rebatemo le punte fora de strada" (and we hit the thrusts pushing them out of their way).

The thrust is considered a lethal blow which is able to divert the guards of the opponent thanks to its dangerousness and rapidity (VII; 1-7). The main disadvantage of this blow is the possibility of being intercepted by a cutting blow, with the consequence of a slow recovery of the weapon. That danger does not exist in the cuts because they keep the original trajectory thanks to the high kinetic energy. That's the reason why the author suggests to withdraw quickly the point when a thrust does not hit the target (VIII; 1-24). The thrust can not be used in a fight with several opponents because of its low recover (IV; 73-76).

Vadi mentions also the stramazzone and the roteggiare. The first one is a fendente moulinet, with a rotation of the wrist, that Vadi makes keeping the arms always extended ahead in front of the fencer's face, never leaving the line of attack (X; 13-16). The "roteggiare", called also "rotare" or "rota" is a succession of moulinets. After having read the sixth chapter one can presume that it could be a sequence of fendente rovescio-rotta dritta- fendente dritto- rota rovescia that can start again from its end because each blow is the natural charging of the following one (XV; 1-12).

In the position of guard or when he's throwing a blow the fencer should always remember that the sword has to be kept near the body, protecting it; moreover it is a good rule to keep the sword towards the face of the enemy in order to intimidate him (XVI; 1-12).

### **III. Parries.**

Vadi's methods of parrying are three. The first and more explicit one suggests to parry the blows of the adversary with a direct fendente to the opposite blade. In case of a fendente or a rota the swords will cross up or down, while the volanti and the thrusts will be turned towards the ground. During that action Vadi advises to force the opponent's guard when the blades are in contact, in order to gain some time for the risposte (XI; 11-16).

The second method of parrying has its origin from the low guard. From that position one raises the sword to cross the opponent's one. Vadi stresses the possible dangers of this action, because these parries have not enough strength to contrast a powerful fendente (VI; 4-6; 28-33).

The third method is useful while parrying thrusts and fendenti, and it is executed throwing a volante to push the blade of the opponent out of the fencer's side (VI; 22-24).

The ninth chapter is about the cross, and presumably the Author by "cross" means the cross parry. This action consists in stopping the blade of the enemy opposing our blade orthogonally with a counter-cut, creating a cross with the two blades. The *Flos Duellatorum* shows a similar interpretation and it distinguishes different kind of crossing: crossing at the sword point, at the half-sword and low crossing. They are also divided into "coverte" dritte (dritto parries, or covers) and "coverte" rovesce (rovescio covers). The nine verses of Vadi about parries are generic and consist in a praise of this kind of defense (IX; 1-9).

#### **IV. Feints, time and measure.**

There are many verses talking about the "viste" of the sword, that's to say the feints, made to confound the adversary, who will not understand where our blow will be directed. The author admits his incapacity of explaining with words these actions (XII; 1-8).

A feinting technique, for example, starts from the measure of half-sword, and goes on throwing a sequence of blows towards a flank of the opponent, doing the feints on the opposite side. When the enemy will be losing his equilibrium, a blow is thrown to the side where the feints were made, ending with a grip (XIII; 1-8).

The "mezzo tempo", or half-time, is a fast blow thrust with a wrist turn, without charging. Vadi admits again his difficulty in explaining by means of only words his intentions (XIV; 1-8 and XVI; 13-17). There are two further examples of mezzo tempo: the first one is the already quoted stramazzone (X; 13-16) and the second is the mysterious volarica that wounds and parries at the same time hitting the opponent to the head with its good (or true?) edge.

There's a reference to the "tempo grande" (big time) considered one of the more effective fencing actions, that can penetrate the opponent's guards thanks to powerful blows (VIII; 28-33).

Measure: we can presume that the same measures of FdL and the Bolognese school are applied by Vadi, as it appears both from the text and the illustrations (see in the Glossary).

Vadi, like Marozzo and unlike Fiore dei Liberi, often comes to the half-sword or to the close play by means of thrusts from below, falso cuts or feinting motions that open the way to close on the opponent.

#### **V. Measure of the sword.**

The total height of the two hands sword must be the same of the fencer from the ground to the armpit. The round pommel should be apt to be closed in the hand, making the hold easy. The handle is high a span and the hilt has to be as long as the sum of the handle and the pommel, with a square section and the final part flat and sharp. The sword to be used in armour is similar but sharpened only four fingers from the point and with a pointed hilt and pommel (II; 1-20).

The sword must be light because with it the fencer should be able to wound and return into his guard (VIII; 39-40), so that in a fight with several adversaries the fencer will have more chances to be able to take the sword in time whenever it is needed (IV; 67-72).

In a duel, the fencer should check that his sword and the one of the adversary are identical avoiding that the enemy obtains the advantage of a longer sword (IV; 31-34 and 55-60).

## **2 - The two hand sword techniques of the treatise.**

In this section we analyse the individual techniques of the two hand sword in the first part –the textual one- of the treatise. The Roman numerals refer to the chapter of the original text, and the cardinal numbers to the lines. The text between the square brackets does not come from the treatise, but it represents an (uncertain) hypothesis that comes from the sequence of the described technique.

It is important to stress that these techniques in general are maybe more similar to the two-hand sword play of Achille Marozzo than to the techniques of the Flos Duellatorum.

In particular FdL almost always comes to the half sword and to the grips after a cross-parry, while both Vadi and Marozzo often approach with a false edge cut or a thrust from below, and both make much use of the feint to open the way for a grip.

### **1) III; 31-36**

Following a cross parry (probably a mandritto), without going out from the line of attack (“non vadi però for de strada”) and covering himself with his own arm, the fencer throws a thrust to the face of the opponent. It is the description of a simple parry and risposte (see FdL 19 b I-II).

To the thrust some cuts and a grip may follow, also as indicated in the second technique here below.

### **2) III; 46-48**

After a rovescio cross parry, the fencer goes out from the line with an external left step throwing a mandritto. While crossing the blades it is necessary to lift up the pommel and to lower the point, leaving your adversary sword to pass from the right to the left on his own head. The right external step has to be simultaneous to this action so that the blade of the opponent can go out from the fighting line. The Flos Duellatorum includes the same technique from a mandritto parry (20A pic.3 and 4), although in the Getty manuscript the text describes the same action that we have here (the images, however, illustrate the same action of the Pisani Dossi). The action can end coming to the “close play” and executing with a grip.

3) III; 58-69

Directly from a guard or after a parry (probably a rovescio one) the fencer has to take control over the adversary's blade with his own sword, with a cross-step of the right foot to the left, then the fencer pushes a dritto thrust to the chest of the opponent. If the point does not hit (for a parry of the opponent) a big step forward is taken, swiftly moving the left hand to grip the hilt of the adversary sword. If even this action fails, it is necessary to hit the sword of the enemy to anticipate any risposte.

This action is the same grip that Achille Marozzo executes both with the single sword (the only one he describes, at chapter 101 of the Opera Nova, edition of 1536) and with the two hand sword (Grip I of the true edge on true edge grips, Book III).

4) VIII; 16-18

Even if this is a technique indirectly described, in a negative form, it suggests a precise action. From the falso impuntato blow the fencer must quickly make a fendente, in order to increase the chances to wound the adversary.

5) VIII; 22-27

When the opponent throws a thrust and it is diverted going in lower dritta cross (that's to say the cross formed by the two blades with the point towards the ground), the fencer goes on throwing a fendente mandritto that, thanks to its strength, can break into the parry from below of the opponent, or at least will make him lose his guard position.

6) X; 13-20

The fencer throws a stramazzone (moulinet cutting blow having the arms extended in front of the face); the blow is doubled with a rovescio, thrown going off the line with an oblique step, followed by a mandritto.

7) X; 21-33

When the fencer wants to enter in the half-sword fighting it is necessary to wait in "Boar Guard" that the opponent charges a blow. In that moment the fencer enters from below with a rovescio falso impuntato directed to the face, immediately doubled with a rovescio or a mandritto. In the following lines Vadi suggests to throw the last blows not like pure fendente or riverso (presumably tondo) but with an intermediate action between the two, that's to say two diagonal blows (sgualembri) directed towards the face.

So it is possible to come to the half sword play and maybe from there to the "gioco stretto".

Strangely enough, it seems that here for Vadi the word "fendente" has the same meaning (of vertical downwards blow) that it has in our Glossary and in the Bolognese School, instead of the wider sense that this word has in the Flos Duellatorum and also for our Author (any downwards blow, be it vertical or diagonal). The same "anachronistic" appearance of the names used later on in the Bolognese School can be noticed also in the Flos Duellatorum, where it appears the word "tondo" for an horizontal blow instead of "mezano".

This may indicate that the names of the blows used by the Bolognese School were already used much time before the treatises of Marozzo and Manciolino.



8) XI; 21-30

When throwing a rovescio fendente it is necessary to be careful that the opponent does not throw a falso mandritto from below. In that case the fencer parries the opponent's blow renouncing to go on with his own cut, feints a falso rovescio to the face and, as soon as the opponent goes to the parrying position, throws a ridoppio rovescio from below to the arms.

Finally, the blow is doubled with a mandritto.

9) XI; 33-41

When throwing a mandritto it is necessary to be careful that the enemy does not hit with a rovescio from below. In this case, the fencer parries with a fendente that strikes down the blade of the opponent, following with a grip holding the pommel of the opponent's sword with the left hand, and striking in the meanwhile with a pommel blow to the face.

10) XIII; 1-17

The fencer makes repeated feints to one side and throws to the other.

When the opponent begins to lose his line of attack and his balance, the fencer may go to the grips, or he may decide to execute the following technique.

The fencer throws (or feints) a fendente, forcing the opponent to lift his sword up, in order to parry. In mezzo tempo, he makes the first fendente pass through the opponent's parry (even without touching it at all), then he throws a falso impuntato directed towards the face is driven under the parry. A rovescio or a mandritto ends the action.

11) XV; 3-12

If the enemy throws several diagonal blows from below or from above (roteggiare), it is necessary to synchronize with him in order to cross his sword at the right time. Otherwise, one could wait in "guardia di dente de cinghiare" (Boar Tooth Guard), and thrust him with a rovescio falso impuntato while he charges the following blow.

12) XV; 17-28

When the opponent is in a "porta di ferro" (Iron Door) guard - it is not specified which one - the fencer must be in "posta sagittaria" (Archer Guard) and push a thrust to the face going out from the line of attack, paying attention to avoid a blow. When the blades are in contact and the opponent has lifted his sword high enough it is possible to come to the close play. In particular Vadi makes reference to the thirteenth action described in the seventh part of the treatise (21v pic. 1, see).

## **TECHNICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ILLUSTRATED PART OF THE TREATISE.**

Now we'll consider the techniques illustrated by Vadi in the second part of the treatise.

In the following analysis the fencer on the right part will be "Right" and the one on the left "Left".

When we'll refer to techniques from Fiore dei Liberi's Flos Duellatorum ("FdL") in general we refer to the edition of Novati of the Pisani Dossi manuscript, republished by the Italian Fencing Federation (FIS) in 1982, with the numeration of the sheets from the original handwritten manuscript.

We refer mainly to the Pisani Dossi and not to the other manuscripts because Vadi's treatise presents much more similarities with that manuscript than with the others.

When comparing Vadi's two hand sword techniques with Marozzo's ones we refer to the grips contained in Book III of the Opera Nova, while when we compare Vadi's dagger techniques with the Bolognese Master's ones, we refer to the dagger grips at the end of Book V of the Opera Nova, always the edition of 1536 or 1550.

## TWO HAND SWORD

15r

The first painting of the treatise shows a two hand sword fencer circled with images that symbolize different aspects of the art taught by Filippo Vadi.

The virtues of the right hand are both rapidity and prudence (with particular attention to the "mezzo tempo" blows), while the left hand can go to hold the blade and it's used for the grips.

Regarding footwork this one is described as an attacking action with the two legs which open and close: the right foot goes forward and comes back immediately, while the left foot is firm as in a modern lunge.

In defensive actions, on the contrary, we find a circular footwork.

15 v

In this page we find the representation of the seven main blows (see also chapters from V to VIII of the textual part).

The two Fendenti, mandritto and rovescio, correspond to the Fendenti of FdL.

Those blows put together the Fendenti and the Sgualembri or Sgualembrati of the Bolognese School, and they can be both vertically and diagonally descending.

The Volanti are horizontal blows like the Mezani of the Flos Duellatorum and the Tondi of the Bolognese School, and they hit from the knees up to the head (Chapter VI).

However Vadi says that the Volante rovescio has to be done with the false edge (Chapter V), and this seems to be a peculiarity of our Author, as it does not seem to be the same in the Flos Duellatorum and surely the "tondo" of Marozzo, Manciolino, etc. is normally executed with the true edge.

The Rota is performed with the false edge and it is divided into two blows (mandritto and rovescio) diagonally ascending.

We do not know if the blows of Fiore dei Liberi from the same angle, the Sotani, were made with the true edge or with the false edge or with one or the other indifferently (the name, which means "blow from below" seems to be a generic word and it could include both cases).

One thing that is sure is that in the Flos Duellatorum there are some images of low crossings of swords that must come from low blows thrown with the true edge.

Achille Marozzo from Bologna uses a more specific terminology calling the ascending diagonal blows Ridoppi if thrown with the true edge and Falsi if with thrown with the false edge.

The seventh blow is the insidious Thrust.

There is not any further distinction between the different kinds of thrusts (*punta roversa*, *dritta ferma*, *imbroccata*...). The author talks only about “thrust”, but we can easily imagine all the different angles of the thrust.

16 r

Fig. 1

Here we find Filippo Vadi himself, who holds the sword in “stand at ease” position like the fencer of page 15r, and opens the second section, illustrating the twelve guards of the two hand sword.

Fig 2

Here there are the first two guards used by Vadi for two hand sword combat.

The first guard is *Mezzana Porta di Ferro* (Middle Iron Door).

A similar guard with the same name is in FdL as the fourth guard of the twelve shown from that Master (FdL 18 A 4).

The difference is clear: while Master Fiore holds the sword between the two legs, Vadi holds it externally to the right leg.

This guard has the peculiarity of being “*Mezzana*”, that’s to say in the middle, central.

This idea is shown again in the *Flos Duellatorum*, page 17 A, with the *Media Porta Ferea* (the name of the guard is in the medieval Latin sometimes used by the author) where it is in the middle of the legs of the fencer, in a central position.

It can be easily said that this guard has the same meaning for Vadi as well, even if the sword is hold in the illustrated position.

In the following authors of the Bolognese School, the “*Porta di Ferro*” guards will be an enlarged family, used with the two hand sword as well as with the one hand sword and they will have the peculiarity of protecting the left part of the body inviting the enemy to hit the right one.

Even if the low guards are better used in a defensive action, Vadi shows us an offensive use of this guard: thrusts (ascending, *montante* thrusts) and *fendenti* (that follow the ascending thrusts).

The same use was present in the FdL that stressed the attention on the defensive use of the guard in avoiding the grips: in that position the opponent is in the impossibility of binding the sword and if he tries to move closer he can receive a thrust from below.

The second guard, opposed to the *Mezzana Porta di Ferro* is the *Posta di Donna* (Lady’s Guard) that we can find in FdL, in two different versions, the second and the seventh guard (18 A Fig. 2 and 18 B Fig. 3).

This guard at a first sight seems very different from the FdL one with the same name, but in the section of the treatise about the Pole-axe we can find a *Posta di Donna* that has the same name and meaning that it has in FdL (charging a diagonal *fendente mandritto* that threatens the enemy, from which a lot of defensive or offensive feint actions may start).

Having verified that the guard can have for Vadi the same sense that it has for FdL, it is easy to suppose that the sword is inclined to the right and not vertical as the picture seems to suggest (it is important to look carefully at the position of the hands).

So also here the meaning of the guard would be the same but, being here without armour, Vadi keeps his sword closer to the line of attack than in the traditional version of the guard.

In fact, Vadi usually does not take away the sword from the line like FdL, who is more traditionalist; in fact he uses the same position with or without armour.

Vadi shows that this guard is capable to deceive the opponent on the length of the sword, this also indicates that the sword is not vertically hold.

16v

Pic. 1

The third guard, left placed, is the Porta di Ferro Piana Terrena (Flat Groundly Iron Door), the same that FdL shows, by the name of Full Iron Door, in 18 A pic. 1 (the first guard in the Pisani Dossi manuscript).

The remarks as well are similar.

Here there is a misunderstanding about the name of the guard.

In fact the first line of FdL tells:

“Tuta Porta de Fero son la piana terrena...” (I am Full Iron Door the Flat and Groundly).

The real name of the guard is Tuta Porta de Fero, while “piana terrena” is simply a description of the position of the sword when making the guard.

In 17A we find to the right of the fencer, low: a “Tota porta Ferea” (Full Iron Door).

Vadi eliminates the “Tuta” from the name of the guard, probably thinking that it was not part of the guard’s name, and he uses “Porta di Fero Piana Terrena” as if this was the name of the guard.

This misunderstanding could be easily explained if Vadi had seen a copy of the Flos Duellatorum or if he had met someone who knew the name of the guard from a Flos Duellatorum manuscript and not directly from Master Fiore.

It is also possible that the verses of FdL, orally handed on at the times of Vadi, could have changed with time. The guard is for both authors a defensive position against cuts and thrusts.

The Posta di Falcone (Falcon Guard) is opposed to the previous one and it’s a very high guard (described as defensive using the same words that FdL used for the Posta di Donna in 18 A 2) that we cannot find in other authors.

Pic. 2

To the left we find Posta Breve (Short Guard), quite similar to the one used by FdL (19A pic. 1), and with almost identical verses accompanying it.

Vadi places his fencer with the left foot advanced, and the sword held horizontally instead than slightly inclined like FdL, but these are uninfluent differences, while the sense of the guard is the same: from this position we can menace the opponent with a thrust that may hit and quickly be retreated, going back into the guard.

A more significant difference is that the arms are more extended here than in FdL, and curiously more extended than in the Long Guard (see).

Against it we find Posta Sagittaria (Archer Guard, or maybe Sagittarium Guard), that doesn’t look like the guard with the same name used by FdL in the sword in armour (25B pic. 1) and by Vadi himself in the pole-axe.

At a first sight it could seem similar to the Posta di Bicorno of the Flos Duellatorum (19A pic. 4), but looking more carefully we see that the position of the hands and arms is quite different. In reality this guard is more similar to some guards used by Achille Marozzo in his two-hand sword (for ex. Coda Lunga e Alta).

In fact, as the verses of Vadi remember us, from the crossing and un-crossing of the arms many different feints can have origin, besides the “cavazione” that by nature may go together with a thrust that comes from this guard.

17r

Pic 1

We see here Posta di Vera Finestra (True Window Guard), shown by FdL in 18A pic. 3.

The painting in Vadi's treatise helps us to refuse an interpretation mistake that curiously enough is much extended in the Italian historical fencing world, according to which this guard is a parry against a fendente, identical to a sabre “quinte” parry but executed with a two hand sword.

At a first sight the illustration by FdL could be interpreted in this way, but only if one looks at it without considering the context, and in particular the fact that the guards are always represented one against the other, in Medieval treatises in general and in FdL and Vadi in particular, as we have underlined before.

Consequently, in FdL, the point of the sword is towards the opponent, that is waiting in Mezzana Porta di Ferro: from this guard the fencer can throw a mandritto, and at the same time he can keep at bay the opponent with the point of the sword.

The illustration by Vadi, finally, leaves no doubt: it is not possible to parry a fendente in this position, and the eyes of the fencer are clearly on his opponent.

The guard on the right side, instead, is a Posta Corona (Crown Guard), useful for sword bindings like Vadi informs us, but also to throw thrusts and cuts, as FdL says.

This guard is virtually identical in both authors.

However, in FdL the name of this guard can be Crown Guard or Frontal Guard, like the Pisani Dossi manuscript tells and the Getty specifies better, while for Vadi Frontal Guard is a completely different position.

Pic. 2

We find here Posta de Denti Cinghiare (Boar Tooth, or Teeth, Guard), identical to the Dent de Zenchiar of FdL, also with the right leg advanced.

The sword is kept to the left, as we can see more clearly from the illustration of FdL than from the one of Vadi.

Another proof of this fact is also in the precious illustration at page 17A of the Flos Duellatorum (see the “Dens Apri” – “Boar Tooth” in Latin, low and to the left).

Moreover, even in the Bolognese School, where we can find a whole family of “Boar” guards, all those guards has the main characteristic to keep the sword to the left of the fencer, inviting an attack to the right side, and they are very useful to throw thrusts from below and falsi roversi (Marozzo, Opera Nova, Chapt. 139 in the 1536 edition).

To the right side we find Posta Lunga (Long Guard), quite different from FdL's guard (18A pic. 1), being much more “closed”: from here one can lunge ahead with a blow,

instead of keeping at bay the opponent and hitting him with a quick thrust to the throat or face after a cavazione, like in FdL.

It is difficult to say how this guard can have had such an important variation, maintaining only the characteristic to have the point advanced towards the opponent.

Also, note that in Vadi's manual the Long Guard has the arms much less extended than the Short Guard (see), while the contrary is true in FdL (more logically).

17v

Pic. 1

We have here Posta Frontale (Frontal Guard), a guard that does not exist in FdL, where Posta Corona may be called also Posta Frontale but it is completely different from this position.

Vadi indicates that it doesn't fear cuts or thrusts.

From this position one may menace the opponent with a roverso cut or a thrust, so from a technical point of view this guard is a relative of the Stancha Posta di Vera Finestra of the Flos Duellatorum (19A pic. 2).

The guard number twelve, finally, is Posta di Cingiaro, or Cinghiale (Boar Guard), similar to the traditional Boar Tooth Guard but with the left foot advanced like in the Porta di Ferro Cinghiara (Boar Iron Door Guard) of the Bolognese School.

So, at least regarding the history of the "Boar" guards, Vadi is really a junction point between FdL and the Bolognese School.

Pic. 2

Here we find the first of the two hand sword techniques, in "gioco largo".

Left throws a rovescio with a step of the left foot (as Vadi advises), Right goes to parry crossing the blade (with the right foot advanced, also like Vadi says), then Left immediately throws a mandritto blow without any footwork, keeping his l. side towards the opponent.

The first roverso blow can be a feint (the sword doesn't touch the opponent's sword) or a real but light blow, in any case the aim is to hit with the second blow, making use of the opening to the left side of the opponent caused by his parrying motion.

18r

Pic. 1

Left parries a mandritto, probably stepping ahead with his right foot, then, advancing with his left foot, he takes with his l. hand the r. wrist of Right. The technique ends with a pommel blow or a fendente blow.

It is the same "gioco stretto" technique that we find in FdL 21A pic. 3

Pommel blows of various kinds can be found also in the two hand sword grips of the Opera Nova by the Bolognese Master Marozzo.

Pic. 2

Right throws an horizontal or almost horizontal mandritto stepping ahead with his r. foot, Left moves his sword to parry.

Then Right, without hitting the opponent's sword or hitting it lightly just to stop its movement in an easier way, side-steps to the left with his l. foot, grasps his own sword by the blade and closes on the opponent thrusting him.

This half-sword technique, that could be hard to understand looking just to Vadi's words, is explained very well in FdL (21B pic. 3 in the Pisani Dossi), specially in the Getty Manuscript.

18v

Pic. 1

A "gioco stretto" technique: Right parries a mandritto advancing with his r. foot, then he puts his l. arm over the opponent's arms with another step, and blocks them.

It's the same technique shown by FdL in 23A pic. 1 (the previous moment is shown in 22B pic. 4), but here the opponent has escaped with his l. arm, while in FdL both arms had been caught.

Pic. 2

Left parries a blow, probably a mandritto (note that the opponent has his r. foot advanced), and takes the handle of the opponent's sword with his l. hand, thrusting at the same time with his sword.

There is not an identical technique in FdL, although many are more or less similar.

19r

Pic. 1

Left parries a mandritto (also here the opponent has his r. foot advanced) with a step of the r. foot, slips to the left with a further step taking his own blade with his l. hand and goes to cut the opponent's throat in "gioco stretto".

In FdL (Pisani Dossi) we cannot find this technique, but we can consider it a variation of the pommel blow actions.

However, in the Getty manuscript there is a similar illustration, but it is in relation to a countermove to a grip.

If we want to consider a possible relation between the two, we would have to interpret this technique as a countermove to the preceding action (that is not identical to the action shown by FdL, but not so different either).

In this case it is not clear why Right has both his hands on the sword's handle, if not for a copist's mistake.

If this was the case we would have a mistake in copying the preceding technique, and also in this one, so we prefer to consider it an independent technique, with no relation with FdL.

Moreover, if Vadi really takes as a basis for his manual a version of FdL, it is probably a manuscript or tradition following the Pisani Dossi and not the Getty version, so it is strange that here it follows (very badly) the Getty manuscript.

Pic. 2

From FdL (22B pic. 3 in the Pisani Dossi, but see the Getty for a clearer explication) we know that such action is not a complete technique but a follow-up, in this case probably of the previous technique: after having hit the opponent, Left steps ahead

surrounding the opponent's neck with his r. arm, grasps his arm or hilt with his l. hand, loads the opponent on his flank and throws him to the ground.

19v

Pic. 1

Usually this action too is a follow-up: here for some reason Left leaves his sword and makes use of the opponent's one to throw him to the ground, grasping first the hilt and then, once made a step ahead, the blade.

Maybe this is a choice, maybe the opponent had a grip on Left's sword and he couldn't use it like he wanted (FdL 22B pic. 2).

In Marozzo, in the two habd sword grips (Book III of the Opera Nova), we find both possibilities: in some actions (for example Grip III of the true edge on true edge grips) he voluntarily leaves his sword, in others he does so because his opponents grasps his sword (for example Grip II of the false edge on false edge grips, where the opponent blocks a pommel blow and takes the pommel of the fencer's sword with his l. hand).

Pic. 2

The articular key that we find here presents no difficulty at all, but it is not clear how Right has come to it, and there is no correspondence with FdL.

If we have to try an interpretation, we'd say that Right parries a mandritto and enters into the "gioco stretto", where he grasps the l. wrist of the opponent with his l. hand, making him turn. Then he uses the hilt of the sword over his elbow, stepping ahead with his r. foot, to put him into the key.

20r.

Pic. 1

The same thing that we said for the previous technique is valid for this one.

We presume that Right parries a mandritto stepping ahead and, taking the opponent's blade with his l. hand, he makes a pommel blow to the face. Then he leaves his sword, grasps the opponent's shoulder with his r. hand and side-steps to the r. bringing his r. leg behind the r. leg of the opponent.

From this position he can put the opponent out of balance and throw him to the ground.

Pic. 2

Also here we have no help from FdL.

There are two possible interpretations:

a) Left parries a mandritto and enters into the "gioco stretto" trying to hit with a pommel blow, but Right blocks his r. arm using his forearm and his sword's handle, then he brings his l. hand on the opponent's arm and twists it towards his l. side, breaking it and making the opponent fall with a trip.

b) Right parries a mandritto, steps ahead with his l. foot and takes the arm of the opponent between his sword handle and his l. arm, then he steps ahead with his r. leg bringing it behind the r. leg of the opponent.



Finally, he pushes the opponent's arm to the left using his r. forearm, making also a trip to him and throwing him to the ground.

In any case it is a strange technique, because the fencer that suffers the throw keeps his sword in the wrong way, like if he was a left-hander, and with a normal fencer the whole action would be possible but quite different.

20v

Pic. 1

Left parries a mandritto with a r. step ahead and with a further step executes a rotation of the sword, taking it with his l. hand and always checking the opponent's blade with his handle and pommel.

Then, making use of his blade on the opponent's neck, he throws him to the ground and/or cuts him.

Alternatively, the same action may come from the feint at Pag. 18r pic. 2.

There is no correspondence with FdL, and from here begins a set of original techniques.

Pic. 2

A countermove of the preceding action: Right closes on his opponent passing outside with his l. leg, and puts his pommel inside Left's l. arm, blocking Left's blade with his hilt. From this position he can twist and break the opponent's arm.

This action can be a countermove also for the technique at Pag. 18r pic. 2.

21r

Pic. 1

As it is not clear which fencer executes the technique, and the accompanying verses could refer equally well to one or the other, this is a technique that cannot have just one interpretation.

We think that there are two main possibilities:

a) A countermove of the preceding technique in 20v pic. 2: Left leaves his sword's blade with his l. hand, and takes it again out of the block made by Right with his hilt, blocking the opponent's sword between his own sword and his breast, and cutting the opponent to the head or arms using the sword's point.

b) A countermove of 20v Pic. 1 or 18r pic. 2: Right puts his sword (upwards from below) between the opponent's blade and his l. arm, blocking the opponent's l. arm and consequently his action. Then Right withdraws his sword cutting the head or arms of the opponent.

Pic. 2

Left parries a mandritto blow with a r. step ahead, then with a further step he closes on the opponent, takes his l. arm and prepares to use his pommel to disarm him.

This is the "tor di spada soprano" of FdL (Page 24A pic. 2).

FdL shows the action of the pommel on the opponent's blade while Vadi shows the preceding moment.

21v

Pic. 1

See technique n. 12 from the textual part of the treatise.

Pic. 2

Right feints a roverso with a r. step, Left goes to a parrying position, Right steps ahead closing on him, shifting the opponent's blade and keeping control on it with his elbow.

22r

Pic. 1

The beginning of this technique is the same of 20v pic. 1, but instead of taking his own blade, Left, always checking the opponent's blade with his pommel and handle, takes a hold on his opponent's neck, putting him out of balance.

The same trip and grip on the neck we find in Marozzo, in the V Grip of the true edge against true edge grips (Book III).

Pic. 2

Having arrived to "gioco stretto", Right puts his pommel outside Left's r. hand and takes the opponent's blade with his l. hand. Then with a swift rotation of the opponent's blade to the left, he obtains a disarm.

22v

Pic. 1

Right feints a fendente mandritto and, while Left goes to the parry, Right instead of throwing the fendente closes on the opponent (so avoiding the possibility of being hit by a reaction of Left under form of a roverso blow). Then he hits the opponent with a blow to the face with the "forte" of the blade or even with the hilt.

Again here we find a use of the feint to open the way for a close-combat action.

Pic. 2

Left throws a roverso with a step of his l. foot, then, as Right parries, he immediately side-steps ahead with his r. foot, executing a pommel blow with two hands.

This is a pommel blow similar to the one made with one hand at page 18r pic. 1, or by FdL with two hands at page 21A, but executed to the other side, on a roverso.

23r

Pic. 1

After a parry with a r. step ahead, Left makes another step bringing his l. leg behind the advanced leg of the opponent, takes the opponent's arm inside and pulls him back making a trip to him. The grip is similar to 23A pic. 3 of FdL, but here the aim seems to be not to get rid of the opponent's sword and hit him like in FdL, but to throw of the opponent to the ground.

Pic. 2

We have here a technique similar to the one that we find in FdL 24B pic. 1. The technique is explained in the Getty manuscript: in “gioco stretto”, from the crossing Right takes with his r. hand the blade of the opponent, then he leaves his sword also with his l. hand and takes the opponent’s pommel.

Finally, turning the sword he disarms the opponent.

The difference is that Vadi prefers to take the opponent’s blade with the left hand, maybe from a crossing derived by a roverso attack, and the pommel with the r. hand. In this way, during the critical moment in which the fencer must resist in the crossing with just one hand, at least he keeps his sword with the strong hand.

Vadi’s version is much safer.

Marozzo executes the same grip and disarm that we have here, from the half-sword crossing (right edge on right edge, Grip XI), but with the left foot advanced, and he does not leave his sword but he puts it under his armpit.

The position of the hands of the Bolognese Master is exactly the same the we see here illustrated.

In the preceding action Marozzo leaves his sword fall like here and disarms the opponent grasping and turning his sword, but the grip is different.

23 v

Pic. 1

Another pommel blow to the right side, forcing the opponent’s sword with the blade, this time from a half-sword parry.

The technique may be executed against a mandritto (r. step parrying, lunge hitting) or from a roverso (l. step parrying, r. step hitting)

Pic. 2

Left throws a roverso with a r. step ahead, Right parries, not too well, so Left, stepping ahead brings his l. leg behind the opponent’s leg.

At the same time he takes his own blade and forces the opponent’s parry, bringing his false edge to Right’s throat.

## THE ART OF THE POLE AXE IN ARMOUR

24r

Pic. 1

The painting shows the first two guards, one against the other: Posta di Donna (Lady’s Guard) and Posta di Cingiaro (Boar’s Guard).

The same two guards can be found in FdL (27A, pic. 3 and 4).

We have already met these guards also in Vadi’s treatise, in the two-hand sword.

In the two hand sword without armour, however, Posta di donna was much more frontal, while here it is similar to the one illustrated by FdL (17B pic. 5, 18A pic. 2, 18B pic. 3), with a big chargement of the blow.

This painting permits us to presume that also in the two-hand sword guard the sword is not vertically held, but its point is inclined towards the left side of the fencer.

Pic. 2

Here we have two more guards: Posta sagittaria (Archer's Guard) and Posta di croce (Cross Guard).

The same Posta di Croce (with a different position of the l. hand, and the point slightly higher, but basically the same) is in FdL (27A Pic. 2).

Posta di Croce can be found only here with this name in Vadi's treatise, but see the Posta di Leoparda Sereno (Serene Leopard's Guard) in the sword in armour.

Both the guard position itself and the verses tell us that this guard is used mainly to parry with great effectiveness the opponent's blows.

The name Posta Sagittaria can be found in the two-hand sword, where a quite different position takes this name. A Posta sagittaria similar to this one, instead, is in the sword in armour of FdL (25A pic. 1). Both forms of this guard in Vadi have the point of the sword directly facing the opponent, and the main offensive actions that can be made are the same, while the position of the body and the way in which the fencer holds the sword are different (the hands are at a distance one from the other in the pole-axe, they are close one to the other and both on the handle in the two hand sword).

Instead of Posta Sagittaria in FdL there is Posta Breve Serpentina, different but always a guard with the point facing the opponent, that can have a similar function against Posta di croce.

24v

Pic. 1

Right, starting from Denti Cinghiale (Boar Tooth Guard), has stroken upwards from below, presumably side-stepping out to avoid the opponent's blow, or as a risposte after a low crossing.

Note, then, that also Denti Cinghiale is a guard that can be used for pole-axe combat, as one could have imagined.

The technique is identical to FdL 27B pic. 2, and also the accompanying verses are almost the same.

In the Getty manuscript a similar illustration shows that Right start from a low crossing, puts his foot on the opponent's pole-axe, and hits like here from below.

Pic. 2

Here Right makes use of a different technique: with the r. hand he lifts the visor of the opponent (not illustrated in the painting), and he hits with a thrust, after avoiding a thrust of the opponent.

The technique is very similar to FdL 27B pic 3, where, however, the opponent's thrust is avoided going to the right and not to the left like here.

Moreover, Vadi's technique is more complicated and acrobatic (note the passage of the pole-axe behind his back,), where FdL is more concise and concrete.

In the Getty manuscript this technique is described as a follow up of the previous one.

25r

Pic 1

Right blocks the opponent's pole-axe with his own weapon, going to the grips, and he grasps the r. arm of the opponent with his l. hand, putting him into an articular key. This technique cannot be found in FdL, that at this point shows a completely different grip.

Pic. 2

In this action Right, starting from a close combat situation, leaves his own weapon taking the opponent's one and disarming him with a rotation. It corresponds to FdL 28A pic. 1, even the verses are quite similar.

## THE ART OF THE TWO HAND SWORD IN ARMOUR

26r

Pic. 1

We can see here the first two guards that can be used with the two hand sword in armour: Sotana posta serpentina (Low Snake Guard) and Leopardo sereno (Serene Leopard Guard).

The first belongs to the Snake Guards family, that we find also in FdL, and is the lowest of these guards.

In FdL only the high and middle Snake Guards are represented: Posta breve la serpentina (Short Snake Guard, in 25A pic. 1, not used by Vadi), and Serpentino lo Soprano (High Snake Guard, 25A pic. 3).

Curiously enough, each of the two authors introduces two guards of this family, but to obtain the complete set we have to look at both of them.

As for Posta di Leopardo Sereno, we can say that this guard is very similar to the Posta di Croce (Cross Guard) in the sword in armour of FdL.

It seems that Vadi wanted to substitute the Cross Guards family of FdL with the Leopard Guards family.

In the pole-axe, instead, the same guard is called like in FdL, Cross Guard, like if the Tuscan Master had forgotten to apply his innovation to a different weapon, and had still given to the guard its traditional name.

Pic. 2

The other guards of the sword in armour are Serpentino lo Soprano (High Snake Guard), identical to the same guard of FdL (25A pic. 3), and Coda di Leopardo (Leopard's Tail Guard), also similar to the True Cross Guard of FdL (25A pic. 2, only the position of the l. hand is slightly different, not a significant difference in any case).

26v

Pic. 1

Right attacks and Left parries crossing.

The action is similar to the one illustrated by FdL (25B, pic. 3), with the difference that in FdL Left, the defending part, advances with the l. leg instead than with the r. one like in Vadi (and this influences the following actions).

Pic. 2

A follow-up of the preceding action: Left advances one step displacing the opponent's sword and hits with a thrust to the face.

Similar to FdL, 25B pic. 4, with the only difference that in FdL, Left, having advanced before with the l. foot, does not make now a full step ahead but a half-step (i.e. a modern fencing step, lunging and following with the other foot).

27r

Pic. 1

We have here a coutermove: Right advances closing on the opponent and grasping with his l. hand his own sword in the middle of the blade, and, most important, grasping also the opponent's weapon, trying to disarm him. At a first look it may seem similar to the technique in FdL (26A pic. 3), but the sense of the technique is completely different: in fact in FdL Right has put the point of his sword between the body and the r. arm of the opponent, turning on himself towards his l. side he will disarm him and putting his l. arm under the opponent's r. arm he will be able to put him into the Lower Key. So the action in reality hasn't anything in common with the one illustrated by Vadi.

Pic. 2

Another coutermove: here Right closes on the opponent with a step ahead grasping the blade of his own weapon and moving aside to the right, hitting the face of the opponent with his pommel.

The same thing does FdL in 26B, pic. 3, but with a different outcome: in fact the Master from Friuli does not hit with the pommel, but tries to trip him with his r. leg and uses the pommel of the sword to pull the opponent back and to throw him to the ground, or at least to force him to leave the blade with the l. hand with the purpose to make use of other techniques from a position of advantage.

In the Getty manuscript we find also a pommel blow like Vadi's, although in such illustration the opponent is in a different position.

27v

Pic. 1

Instead of hitting the face like in the preceding technique, Vadi here uses the pommel and handle of the sword to push the opponent back and to throw him to the ground with the help of a trip, exactly like FdL in 26B pic. 2 (but there FdL has a stronger position, with the sword's handle on the opponent's neck).

Pic. 2

Here we find a drawing showing the sword in armour, and its form and measures are described.

This is a very important information provided by the treatise, as it hands down to us the right measures of the sword.

Naturally, they are not absolute metrical measures, but they are in relation to the body of each fighter.

## THE ART OF THE PIKE

28r

Pic. 1-2

The illustration of the techniques has the same structure that we find in FdL: from several starting guard positions we come to the only final position.

Pic. 1 presents a problem, as the hold on the pike does not permit to arrive to the final position without exchanging the position of the hands.

However, we know from Marozzo and Manciolino that such action was not unusual in this kind of play.

This position could also seem similar to the one in FdL 15B pic. 1, and in this case, presuming a mistake of the painter (the point of the pike should be at the upper end), Vadi would repropose exactly the first page of the pike play of FdL.

This guard is called "Full Iron Door", as the Getty manuscript indicates.

Exactly the same problem, the point of the pike low instead than high, is found in the Getty

Pic 2, instead, is identical to FdL 15B pic. 2, and there is no interpretation problem in relation to it.

His name, as by the Getty manuscript, is Middle Iron Door.

28v

Pic. 1

We have here the third guard of the pike, whose name we know from the Getty manuscript: Right (High) Window Guard. Like the preceding ones, is similar to FdL 15B pic. 3 (but with pike a bit lower, like in FdL 16A pic. 3).

Note that the position of the right hand is probably wrong.

Pic. 2

We have here the final position: a thrust to the body, made after having hitten and displaced to the left the opponent's thrust.

## THE ART OF THE DAGGER AND OF THE UNARMED DEFENCE AGAINST THE DAGGER

29r

Pic. 1

Unarmed defence against the dagger. Right has made a sottomano attack, Left has parried with his arms crossed, Right executes the countermove.

This parry is the same that we find at Pag. 34v, pic. 1, and in FdL 7b, pic. 3, but here it is made against a sottomano attack, instead of a sopramano one.

In the Getty manuscript this parry appears also against a sottomano attack, like here. From this parry many grips can be made.

The countermove to this parry made against a sopramano attack is shown by FdL in 7b, pic. 4: the fencer with the dagger has to push strongly with his l. hand the r. elbow of the opponent towards his own (Right's) r. side.

Vadi, instead, shows us the countermove to this parry used against a sottomano attack: with his l. hand Right takes the l. elbow of the opponent, inside, and pulls him towards his own (Right's) l. side, shifting his arms and freeing the way for the dagger.

Pic. 2

This is a wrestling technique. Left has put his l. hand on Right's shoulder, Right makes the illustrated technique putting Left into a key. The complete action, almost identical, is shown by FdL in 4b, Pic. 1 e 2.

Vadi's action is valid if one makes the technique having advanced, putting well into the key the opponent's elbow and leaving his hand well behind, while FdL technique succeeds even if it is executed in a more backward position (note in FdL the rotation of the body and maybe, if needed, the use of the head to block the hand). It is not clear why Vadi has put here a wrestling action, maybe we have to presume that it comes from a dagger defence, where the dagger has been lost in some way.

29v

Pic. 1

If examined by itself, this action may be seen as follows: Right attacks sopramano, Left blocks with his l. hand (with his thumb below) and counterattacks with a thrust. This parry with one hand, even if it is much less safe than the one with the crossed arms, is used in other techniques both by Vadi and FdL (for example in FdL 6a pic. 5), and by many German medieval authors.

Such interpretation, so, is perfectly admissible.

However, if we look to FdL, 11a pic 5 and the following illustrations, another possibility may be considered. In fact we can see a clear correspondence between Vadi's and FdL's techniques, with the only exception that in Vadi pic. 1 of Pag. 29v should following, and not preceding, Pic. 2.

So pic. 1 would correspond to FdL 11a pic. 6, identical apart from the position of the l. hand, not important for our purpose, and the interpretation could be the following: from the parry in pic. 2, Left takes his opponent's r. hand with his own l. hand, and attacks with a thrust. In this way the technique is much safer.

Also the Getty manuscript describes the action in the same terms.

Please note the possibility, indicated by Vadi, to subtract the dagger to Right, probably turning the opponent's dagger with one's blade. Moreover, it is possible that Left wrings with his l. hand the r. arm of the opponent, as also Master Marozzo shows (Grip X).

Pic. 2

Right attacks sopramano, left parries keeping the blade of his own dagger with l. hand. This action corresponds to FdL, 11a pic. 5, but with the right foot advanced (probably FdL executes the parry without any step, Vada with a step ahead).

From this parry the following actions may begin (and also the preceding one in pic. 1 of the same page).



30r

Pic. 1

From the parry in pic. 2 of Pag. 29v, Left shifts the opponent's dagger towards his r. side and downwards, then pushes ahead and hits with a thrust. This action is identical to FdL, 11b pic. 1.

The same technique can be found also in Marozzo (Grip II) where, however, being the technique executed with the sharper and shorter Bolognese Knife, the emphasis is put more on the cut to the hand to which it can give origin, than on the possibility to make a thrust to the opponent's body.

Pic. 2

The illustration is identical to the one in FdL 12a pic 1.

The thrust to the hand can be executed after the parry in pic. 2 pag. 29v, as a risposte: Left parries, displaces the opponent's dagger and thrusts to Right's hand from below.

This action is explained well in the Getty manuscript of FdL.

Note that while executing the thrust, Left's arms form a protective polygon between his body and the opponent's dagger, controlling it.

30v

Pic. 1

Here Vadi illustrates a parry that at first sight could seem weird, but in reality is a solid and firm parry, and it permits to come immediately to the grips and to put the opponent in an articular key, as also the accompanying verses affirm. The same parry is illustrated also in FdL in 11B pic. 5, together with its countermove. The easiest key from this parry is the Middle Key, according to FdL (12A fig. 3).

Pic. 2

This is the same parry that we found in Pag. 29v pic. 2, but here it is executed against a sottomano attack, displacing the opponent's dagger to the right and so opening the way to a counterattack that can be a thrust or a grip.

31r

Pic. 1

Right has attacked with a sottomano thrust. Left has parried displacing Right's dagger with his l. arm. At this point Right can insert his dagger arm under the l. arm of his opponent, always controlling the r. hand of the opponent with his l. hand, and he puts him quickly into the Lower Key (illustrated by FdL 9A pic. 4).

An action similar to this one, with the same outcome, is illustrated in the Getty manuscript, where the forearm is used, and the right hand of the defender grasps his left wrist like here in 34r pic. 2.

Obviously, in the Getty manuscript the defender is unarmed.

As an alternative, given the position of this technique, we could think that after the parry shown at 30v pic. 2 Left closes on his opponent displacing his dagger with his left arm.

Pic. 2

After the parry in 30v pic. 2, or after a simple parry or displacement with one-hand, Left takes Right's hand when Right is making a thrust (also after a parry like in pic. 2). Now Left can hit with his dagger, or disarm his opponent like in the following technique, but using his dagger and not his hand to turn the opponent's weapon. We have already said that the Getty manuscript shows the same action that Vadi illustrates in 29v pic. 2, on a sopramano attack, so we can presume that here it is made after the parry executed against a sottomano attack, i.e. the parry in 30v pic. 2.

31v

Pic. 1

From the same one-hand parry that we saw in the preceding technique of from a two hand parry, Left, now unarmed, pushes the opponent's dagger downwards and towards the opponent, obtaining a disarm.

FdL (12A pic. 4 and 5) shows the same disarm after a two-hand block on a sottomano thrust.

Also FdL (11A pic. 3 and 4) shows a similar action, against a sottomano attack, with the only difference that there the attacker had grasped the defender by the breast with the left hand, then the defender blocks the thrust, always grasping his arm with two hands like above, and disarms him with this action on the dagger.

In the Getty manuscript the two last dagger techniques are the same that we find here, executed one after the other: Left, after having parried with two hands like above, hits with a thrust, then leaves his dagger and takes his opponent's one.

An action similar to the one illustrated here is shown also by Marozzo (Grip XIII), where the dagger is taken from the opponent's hand with an anti-clockwise rotation, instead than directly downwards, having taken the dagger with the r. hand with the thumb towards the point, not towards the hilt like here.

Pic. 2

Again a thrust to the attacker's hand, this time against a sottomano thrust. The same system that we found at Pag. 30r pic. 2 is used: a thrust delivered immediately after the parry in 310v pic. 2, keeping to check the opponent's dagger with the polygon formed by the arms.

The action can be concluded by a grip and an articular key.

32r

Pic. 1

The same parry that we have found at Pag 29v pic. 1, but executed on a sottomano attack, like in FdL 12A pic. 3. The articular key that can be obtained in the easiest way from this parry according to FdL (and tested by us) is the Lower Key.

Pic. 2

Left hits with a fist the arm of Right, displacing or stopping his attack. From here several actions can have their origin: further boxing actions, disarms, articular keys etc., in particular Vadi mentions a technique in which the opponent's dagger is used against him, maybe doing a thrust to the thigh similar to the one at Pag. 36r pic. 2, or FdL 10A pic. 4, or a thrust to the belly, as also the Getty manuscript indicates.

32v

Pic. 1

Left executes the parry with one hand, the l. one. The same technique is taught by FdL in 6A pic. 5.

From here Left could do several actions, but Vadi speaks just of a disarm (maybe the classical one that can be found in FdL 7A pic. 5).

Pic. 2

A technique deriving from the the preceding "coverta", from which, without any hesitation, Left executes a blow/grip to the throat, with a trip. The trip works well because Left uses the grip to the throat to push the opponent back, to his (Left's) left side, making him lose his balance.

Not very different from this technique is Grip I from Marozzo, with the difference that for Marozzo the grip has clearly only the aim to throw the opponent to the ground, being made to the side of the neck and not to the throat, while for Vadi it can be well considered an independent offensive action in its own right, and not a pleasant one to suffer!

In the Getty manuscript we find a similar grip and trip, but in that case the defender surrounds the opponent's neck with his arms, and the sense is more similar to Marozzo's technique, meant just to throw the opponent.

33r

Pic. 1

We find here the classic Middle Key, that also FdL shows, deriving from the same "coverta" (6A pic. 5, 6B pic. 3).

Note, however, that Vadi suggests not to use the key to immobilize and control the opponent, but to break his arm with a swift and sharp movement.

The same technique that leads to the Middle Key can be found in Marozzo (Grip XXII), and also the Bolognese Master advises to break immediately the arm, not to try to immobilize the opponent.

Pic. 2

A technique always coming from the parry in pic. 1, with a key similar to the one in FdL at page 6B pic. 1.

In Vadi, however, the key is executed in a lower position on the opponent's arm, and the result is slightly different. In fact, we must presume that FdL has previously disarmed his opponent, who is shown already without his dagger (but this is not true in the Getty manuscript), because the key made by the Master from Cividale would permit a certain freedom of movement to the r. hand of the attacker, while the key used by Vadi is more effective in avoiding any offensive action of the dagger's hand

of the opponent (a disarm could be made after the opponent is put into the key). Anyhow, it is advisable to execute this technique after a disarm, like FdL does. It is also possible to make the hypothesis that Vadi illustrates the technique with the opponent still with his dagger because the action originates from a situation in which the defending part couldn't make correctly the parry because the armed hand of the opponent slips away and ends outside to the left. This possibility is not unlikely at all if one tries to parry with only one hand, as we found out in free sparring. However, the defending part can obtain again a position of advantage and avoid to be hurt going ahead and putting his opponent into this key. On field testing has confirmed the practical utility of such interpretation of this technique.

33v

Pic. 1

Presumably always from the same "cover", Left rotates and breaks his opponent's arm. The technique is very similar to the one in FdL 7A pic. 3 (where, however, the parry is the same shown by Vadi in 34r pic. 2), with almost identical verses of comment, but it can be found in FdL also from other starting positions: in 10B pic. 4 the defender, who have been grasped by the attacker by the breast, takes his opponent's hand with two hands and rotates, in 12A pic. 6 the action follows a parry with two hands.

Note that here the opponent is not thrown to the ground, but instead his arm gets broken. The same action is shown also by Achille Marozzo (Grip XII), and also the Bolognese Master affirms that its conclusion is the breaking of the arm, not a throw.

Pic. 2

Here the opponent's arm is taken with two hands and wringed, obtaining a key and the disarm. There is no correspondence with FdL or Marozzo.

34r

Pic. 1

Again a grip with a key, that can start from Pag. 32v pic. 1 (but also from different "covers"): it can lead to arm breaking and by consequence to a disarm, or to the grounding of the opponent. It is the same technique taught by FdL in 7B pic. 5 (but there we start from a block of the opponent's thrust executed crossing both arms like in Vadi Pag. 34v pic. 1).

FdL always shows its countermove, at the following picture.

Note that this is not the same technique illustrated in FdL 6B pic. 5 and 9B pic.3.

Pic. 2

We find here a different parry in which both arms are used, with the r. hand that takes the l. wrist. It is a "cover" much safer and firmer than any one hand parry, and from it many techniques may start.

Comparing it with the crossed arms parry, we can note that here we'll stop the opponent's dagger at a longer distance: that's why FdL in the Getty manuscript tells us that this parry is good in any case, while the other is better in armour (the point of a long dagger could arrive to touch the defender).

34v

Pic. 1

We find here the good “coverta” with the crossed arms, that we have already seen used against a sottomano attack, with its countermove, at Pag. 29r pic. 1.

Here it is made against a sopramano attack, as FdL had already shown in 7B pic. 3. From it, as Vadi says, one can make all the techniques that we have seen until now, and also the following ones. The particular advantage of this parry, besides its effectiveness and solidity, is to make easy any kind of grip, as the opponent’s wrist is taken between both hands of the defender.

Pic. 2

In FdL this is the first of the “giochi de parte riversa”, techniques executed after a parry with the right hand.

From such parry with the right hand (but also after the parry in pic. 1 or the one at Pag. 34r pic. 2), Left takes with his r. hand the r. wrist of the opponent, probably quickly disarming him with his l. hand.

At this point Left advances one step, putting his leg behind the r. leg of the opponent (never leaving the opponent’s wrist with his r. hand), and with his l. arm he pushes him back, throwing him to the ground. The same technique can be found in FdL (8B pic. 3) and Marozzo (Grip IV), where there is no previous disarm, it is made against a sottomano attack, and it follows a parry executed with the right hand, together with a side-step to the left that help to avoid the opponent’s thrust and at the same time closes on him.

35r

Pic. 1

Here Left, after the same “cover”, displaces the dagger arm of the opponent and going ahead, closing on him, surrounds his neck with his r. arm. Finally, he throws the opponent to the ground with the help of a trip.

From FdL (8B pic. 4) we know that this is a technique more indicated if we are wearing armour.

Pic. 2

We know from FdL (9B pic. 1) that this is a different kind of parry. From here Left will execute one of the grips shown in the following pages.

35v

Pic. 1

A typical articular key to the elbow, that can be executed from the grip at Pag. 34v pic. 1, but also from one of the parries previously shown, twisting the arm and forcing the opponent to rotate. Here the key is used, like usually, not to immobilize the opponent, but to break his arm.

Similar articular keys FdL illustrates in 8B pic. 5 and 9A pic. 1, starting from a parry with the right hand.

The same action is described also by Marozzo (Grip IX). Note that Marozzo shows in his illustration the moment between Vadi's grip at Pag. 35r pic. 2 and the following technique here illustrated.

Pic. 2

The principle is the same of the preceding action, but here the key is executed on the wrist.

36r

Pic. 1

We find here the Lower key (the name is indicated by FdL, that shows it at page 9A pic. 4, after a parry with the right hand), in which it is possible to keep under control the opponent with just one hand. Left arrives here like in the preceding techniques, and note that he gets advantage from the key hitting immediately the opponent with a fist.

Pic. 2

After having blocked Right's thrust with a parry, and continuing to check his armed hand with his l. hand, Left puts his r. hand on the pommel of the opponent's dagger and pushes it downwards, thrusting it into the opponent's thigh (the same action can be found in FdL, 10A pic. 4).

36v

Pic. 1

The same key illustrated at Pag. 34r pic. 1, with the only difference that here the dagger is kept in another way.

Pic. 2

From any "cover", Left takes the dagger hand of the opponent with both his hands, throwing him to the ground with a torsion of his forearm to his r. side. FdL shows it from the cover at page 35r pic. 2 (Getty manuscript).

37r

Pic. 1

After a parry, Left makes his opponent lose balance pushing him back by the elbow. So the advanced leg of the opponent, in this case the r. one, is freed from the body's weight and it can be easily lifted, so Left can throw Right to the ground. A technique showing a similar grip to the thigh can be found in Marozzo (Grip II) where, however, the action is substantially different: it follows a sottomano attack, the l. hand takes not the elbow but the hand of the opponent, and the throwing is made after having loaded the opponent on the defender's shoulders. More similar to the technique under examination in a substantial technical way is Marozzo's Grip III, in which the opponent is pushed back and loses his balance. Also here Marozzo prefers to take the opponent's wrist than his elbow, and to take his leg under the knee than under the thigh, that is more at hand but more difficult to lift. Moreover, the

fighter that executes the technique in Marozzo stays frontal instead of rushing ahead like in Vadi (an action that could help to unbalance the opponent). Even with the said differences, the technique is basically the same.

FdL does the same action from the parry at 34r pic. 2 taking the opponent at the wrist (7B pic. 1), and from the parry at 35r pic. 2 taking him at the elbow like here (9B pic. 6), always against sopramano attacks.

Pic. 2

A technique similar to the preceding one, in which Right obtains to take his opponent out of his balance closing on him and lifting him instead of pushing him, by means of a grip on his r. wrist.

It can be found in FdL, 10B pic. 5, always from the parry at 35r pic. 2.

37v

Pic. 1

We see here a countermove to the technique shown by Vadi at Pag. 33v pic. 1:

Right, that could suffer the said technique, rotates his r. arm, flexing his elbow, then goes down and takes with his l. hand the leg of his opponent: once he has a grip on the leg he will be able to throw him to the ground.

FdL does the same at page 7A pic. 4.

Pic. 2

Finally, to conclude the first part dedicated to the dagger, Vadi offers us the form and measure of the dagger itself.

## TWO STICKS AGAINST THE PIKE

38r

Pic. 1

With two sticks Left defends himself from Right that is armed with a pike. Right will attack, naturally, with a thrust. The technique is similar to the one in FdL 15A, pic. 3 and 4, in which it is possible to see the final position of the technique.

In both Vadi and FdL the defender parries with the stick that he keeps in his l. hand in the typical "invitation" position of FdL.

The difference is that FdL advises the defending part to throw the stick of the r. hand to the face of the opponent and to hit with the dagger that he keeps into his belt (pic.4), while we must presume that Vadi, that paints the defender without any dagger, suggests him to hit the opponent with the stick in his r. hand.

## SWORD DEFENCE AGAINST JAVELIN THROW

38r pic. 2 and 38v pic. 1 e 2

Here the author shows us two defences with the sword against the throw of a javelin or short pike. The defences foresee a "cover" blow (the first a roverso and the second a mandritto), and probably a side-step (the first to the left and the second to the right).

Note that the starting position corresponds more to guards typical of FdL than to the two-hand sword guards of Vadi himself (the second, for example, is a *Posta reale di vera finestra* of FdL), as we have to make a wide-open invitation to throw to one side. FdL introduces similar actions in 16B, pic 1 and 2: the first cover blow is very similar to Vadi's one, while the *mandritto* goes upwards from below in FdL and downwards from above in Vadi.

Finally, Vadi tells us that from this point the so-called "partiti di daga" begin, techniques illustrated by means of two paintings each, that show the starting and the final position of the action.

## THE ART OF THE DAGGER: "PARTITI DI DAGA"

39r

Pic. 1-2

All the following techniques are original, they can be found only in Vadi's treatise, and not in FdL or Marozzo.

Here Left takes Right to the neck pushing him downwards to hit him with a stab (pic. 1), but Right reacts (pic. 2) blocking Left's r. arm from under the armpit with his r. arm.

At this point Right stands up throwing his opponent back, also by means of a trip.

39v

Pic. 1-2

Left takes Right by the shoulders and prepares to thrust him (pic. 1), Right turns on himself (pic. 2), passing his l. arm under the opponent's arm and putting his l. leg behind the opponent's leg. At this point Left is unbalanced and cannot avoid to suffer the trip.

40r

## SWORD AGAINST DAGGER

Pic. 1-2

Left attacks his opponent, that is armed with a sword, taking him by the breast and preparing to stab (pic. 1), but Right unsheathes the sword in time (pic. 2) and with it he blocks and/or cuts the dagger arm of the attacker.

40v

Pic. 1-2

Left has taken the dagger arm of Right, Right trying to free his hand rotates on himself, arriving to the illustrated position (pic. 1), where Left prepares to thrust *sottomano*.

At this point, Right takes the l. wrist of Left with his l. hand, twisting his arm (and so freeing his own r. hand) and rotating again on himself, this time towards his r. side. So Left is put into an articular key.



41r

Pic. 1-2

Right takes hold on Left and prepares to hit him (pic. 1), Left precedes him, sharply displacing the opponent's l. arm with his r. hand (pic. 2), towards his l. side, and closes on him going down and to the l. side of the opponent, far from his weapon. Left ends the action grasping his opponent to the waist as shown in the painting, lifting his leg with the r. hand: so Right is completely out of balance and can be thrown back to ground.

This action must be very quick, otherwise the dagger of Right becomes too dangerous.

41v

Pic. 1-2

Against a thrust by Right, Left grasps his armed hand, then runs ahead on him and loades him on his shoulders, always keeping the grip on his r. hand.

42r

Pic. 1-2

One of the two fighers has blocked the other from his back. The defender, keeping his arms very close to his body and ahead, frees himself going down, grasps with his r. hand the r. thigh of the opponent and rises up, throwing him to a side.

42v

Pic. 1-2

Left has grasped Right and prepares to hit with a sottomano thrust. Right side-steps to his r. side, blocks the armed hand of the opponent with his l. hand and hits sopramano, passing over the l. arm of the opponent.

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This Bibliography has not any ambition to be a complete one, but, instead, it has only the meaning to inform the reader of the most important texts consulted by the authors.

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